

SEPTEMBER 2025

ISHRAQ

UNITED STATES

SPECIAL EDITION

HONORING DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM'S LEGACY



 Ghamidi Center
of Islamic Learning
An Initiative of Al-Mawrid US Inc.



SEPTEMBER 2025

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UNITED STATES

UNDER THE GUIDANCE
OF
JAVED AHMED GHAMIDI

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THE TREASURE OF PROPHETIC TEACHINGS

Compilation: Muhammad Hassan Ilyas

— 1 —

Abu Hurairah (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: *The very first group to enter Paradise will have faces as radiant as the moon on the night it is full. Then, those who enter after them will shine like the most luminous star in the sky. They will neither spit, nor will any nasal mucus come from them, nor will they be in need of relieving themselves. Their utensils will be of gold, and even their combs will be of gold and silver. In their incense burners will be burning the most purified and fragrant aloeswood (oud), and their sweat will be like musk. Each one of them will have two wives from among the large-eyed, fair maidens, whose shinbones' marrow will be visible through the flesh due to their immense beauty—like red wine seen through a white glass vessel. There will be no one unmarried in Paradise. There will be no mutual discord or hatred amongst them; their hearts will be united as one. Morning and evening, they will be occupied in the glorification and praise of Allah.* (Bukhari, No. 3024)

— 2 —

It is narrated from Anas bin Malik (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH) said: *A morning or an evening journey undertaken in the path of Allah is better than the world and everything in it. A space in Paradise equivalent to the size of one's bow or even less than that, or the distance of a step taken therein, is better than the world and all that it contains. If a woman from among the women of Paradise were to look down upon the earth, she would illuminate everything between the sky and the earth and fill it with fragrance. Indeed, even her veil is better than the world and whatever is in it.* (Bukhari, No. 6111)

— 3 —

It is narrated from Muadh ibn Jabal (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH) said: *When a woman causes distress to her husband in this world, one of his wives from among the wide-eyed houris says: "May Allah destroy you, do not cause him distress. He is only a guest with you; he is soon to leave you and come to us."* (Musnad Ahmad, No. 21528)



SPECIAL EDITION: HONORING DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM'S LEGACY

Syed Manzoor-ul-Hasan

On August 16, 2025, the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning, Al-Mawrid in the United States organized a ceremony to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to the distinguished scholar and researcher of the Farahi school of thought, Dr. Shehzad Saleem. This award was presented in a dignified ceremony held at the Ghamidi Center in Dallas, USA. The ceremony was presided over by the founder of Al-Mawrid, Mr. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. Dr. Shehzad Saleem participated as the guest of honor. The duties of hosting were performed by the Director of Research and Communication of Ghamidi Center, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas, and the welcome address was delivered by the Chair of the Board of Al-Mawrid US, Mukaram Aziz.

On this occasion, various scholars associated with Al-Mawrid paid tribute to Dr. Shehzad Saleem for his 37 years of scholarly and missionary services. His colleagues, relatives, and friends also expressed their views. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi delivered the presidential address. At the end of the ceremony, Dr. Shehzad Saleem spoke, highlighting various aspects of his 37-year association with the institution of knowledge and research, Al-Mawrid.

This issue of September 2025 has been compiled in connection with the same event held in honor of Dr. Shehzad Saleem. All the speeches and discussions from the event have been compiled and presented in written form. A few articles written in consideration of the event are also included in the issue. A special interview of Dr. Shehzad Saleem with Hassan Ilyas is also part of it.

The duties of arranging and editing the sermons and discourses have been carried out by the members of our editorial department: Mr. Shahid Mehmood, Mr. Muazzam Safdar, and Mr. Shahid Raza.



THE VANGUARD OF THE CARAVAN OF RESOLVE

Muhammad Hassan Ilyas

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem

Respected and esteemed ones, the purpose of today's gathering is to pay tribute to one of the great scholars of our time and the driving spirit behind the Farahi school of thought, Dr. Shehzad Saleem, in recognition of his lifelong efforts, his sincerity, and his scholarly contributions. I also wish to clarify the motivation behind this ceremony so that its significance may reach people. In this universe of Allah Almighty, one observes differences everywhere: the faces of people, their appearances, their colors and forms, their voices and tonalities—and in the same manner, there are differences in capabilities as well.

In this world created by Allah, a system has been established in which certain individuals are sent by Allah endowed with extraordinary abilities; they occupy positions of leadership, they are teachers, researchers, jurists, scholars, advisors, well-wishers, leaders, politicians, guides, and mentors. These abilities are granted and entrusted by Allah. While these capabilities are a great blessing, a favor, a grace, a kindness, and a gift from Allah, they also carry with them a tremendous responsibility.

In this world, there are only two types of classes: those who lead and those who follow. Even those who are not granted such abilities still receive an extraordinary favor from Allah, for in many situations, deprivation itself becomes a significant blessing. However, when Allah grants one an ability, the trial becomes more severe, and the responsibility becomes more intense.

The individuals who fulfill this responsibility etch their impact on the pages of existence, contribute to the upbringing of generations, and transform the destiny and lives of nations. Yet, those same talented individuals, if they fail to recognize their responsibilities, can also become the cause of a nation's downfall—because their mere gestures, their ideologies and thoughts, can influence entire communities and generations.

Thus, possessing great talent is not only a divine favor but also a significant trial and test. Those individuals who have been granted these abilities by Allah and use them rightly and appropriately are truly worthy of high praise and heartfelt congratulations.

And the divine design of the world is such that when a human being is given any ability, he often becomes arrogant. He perceives that ability as a mark of his superiority and pride. The history is before us of how Allah dealt with the communities of the prophets: whenever they were given a position, an ability, or a superiority, rather than considering it a blessing from Allah and fulfilling it with a sense of responsibility, they regarded it as a source of pride, rebellion, and arrogance.

Such individuals who have dedicated their lives with sincerity, struggle, hard work, and love for the training of people and generations are of exceptional importance. Our effort and desire are that the world should be introduced to such people, and those people should also be introduced to the world, and their services should be acknowledged. It is a great deprivation for any nation, any community, and the collective systems and institutions of that community when they fail to recognize the value and worth of such individuals. In this materialistic world, people's values and worth are determined by their tangible benefits.

Our endeavor is to communicate to the world the significance of the prominent individuals from every intellectual tradition of the Ummah who have passed through the school of thought of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. Hence, when one enters this institution, the portraits on either side deliver this message—that differences in interpretation and perspective can exist in any school of thought, but all the great figures of the Ummah are our benefactors, our mentors, and we honor them as much as we honor our own elders and predecessors.

Alongside this, there is also the message that as servants of the religion, we have come together in these various institutions to contemplate upon religion. Therefore, within these institutions, this spirit should always prevail: that we have not come here to establish any sectarian prejudice, any denominational identity, or any sense of doctrinal superiority. Nor are we the first people to stand up in service of the religion.

This is an eternal, living, radiant and luminous history of the Muslim Ummah, in the continuity of which we stand today. It is indeed the methodology of jurisprudence and reflection that is carried forward by the Farahi school, or the Ghamidi circle, or the reformist thoughts of Islahi.

Generally, among us, those who are influenced by Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and listen to his ideas form an impression that a new methodology has emerged in opposition to traditional scholarship; this is an entirely incorrect understanding. We categorically reject this notion at every level and strive to inform our circle of disciples that we stand within the continuity of the Ummah's own historical tradition. We do not present a unique or novel perspective with which people are unfamiliar; the tools are the same, the parameters are the same, and the protocols are the same. Differences arise in the application of these tools, and it is precisely this that our institutions aim to address. This is also the objective of our movement—that if today we find confidence in the principles of the Farahi school, then we should promote them and invite others to them. But at the same time, we should benefit from the entire historical scholarly heritage of the Ummah and not compel people to close their minds.

Whoever enters our institution should be awakened with the sense that they are not here to become followers or blind imitators of anyone, nor to become under the influence of any personality. Rather, we are travelers on the journey in pursuit of the truth. And if today that truth appears to us in the thoughts of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, then we will strive to access it. If tomorrow criticism arises upon it, then—God willing—these very institutions, these very assemblies, and these very scholars will together engage in critique of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's thoughts as well. We do not consider him, or any individual of this school of thought, to be infallible in any degree. This is the foundation of our movement and this initiative. In it, individuals hold extraordinary importance, and we evaluate their thoughts within the same critical framework.

It must be kept in mind that when a person is honored, when they are respected and praised, it is not a matter of personality worship; rather, it is an appreciation of their thought. As far as thought is concerned, it is like a flowing river—present at one place today, and at another tomorrow; it constantly evolves and changes. In this context, today's event has been organized. The thought, the movement, and the mission of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi has

now been in existence for nearly fifty years. Among the earliest companions of this mission is Dr. Shehzad Saleem. You are all familiar with his remarkable contributions, his efforts, and his services. We have made an attempt in this institution to celebrate the life dedication of a person who has devoted his entire life with great sincerity and deep love to a mission—so that we may honor this selfless commitment. Alongside, we wish to send a message to our future generations and to our own history: that we must learn to appreciate individuals during their lifetime.

In our society, in most cases, people are appreciated only after they have passed away. A well-known saying of our praised and revered Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is that everyone acknowledges the prophet of history, but no one acknowledges the prophet of their own time. This is a great deprivation for the Muslim Ummah as well—that we never truly appreciate the great minds, great voices, and great ideas of our own era. During this age of mutual rivalry and contemporaneous competition, we rarely appreciate such contributions in their originality.

There is also another dimension to this: many people consider it inappropriate that, since these are individuals from within our own circles, showing them honor and respect appears biased. But here, I would like to state with great confidence and full pride that it is an honor for us to introduce the world to the dignity, the grandeur, and the competence of our teachers and our elders. And we must also communicate this message to them—that they are held in high esteem within our hearts, and this regard is not born out of vested interests or temporary benefits, but rather because of their legacy, their character, and the continuity of their contribution.

We desire that our future generations receive this message: that this institution, this movement, stands firmly within a continuous tradition. It possesses profound, timeless legacies. Within it, individuals of enlightened conscience have emerged, who have furthered its cause through their character. Dr. Shehzad Saleem stands at the forefront of the narrative of these greatneses.

It is a matter of deep gratitude for me that I have the opportunity to formally acknowledge his services within this institution, and after a long journey of thirty-seven years, after the authorship of approximately forty books, and after passing through countless phases of life, we pay tribute to his steadfastness.

People are familiar with Dr. Shahzad Saleem's scholarly contributions and virtues. Personally, my introduction to this school formally occurred in 2009, when I decided that I should now take the initiative and step into one of their institutions. At that time, I was a fourth-year student at Jamia-tur-Rasheed in Karachi. So, this was in December 2009—gathering great courage and determination, I stepped into Hotel Jabees in Karachi for the first time, and there, the very first person I met was Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

I still remember, he was conducting a workshop on *Kimya-e-Saadat*, the book by Imam Ghazali, and it was after this workshop that I was introduced to him for the first time. I was wholly immersed in our madrasah lifestyle, and the introduction was fairly basic. There was also fear, apprehension—who knew what this new circle was, what kind of people they were, how they operated. So, after that first meeting with him, when it ended, he asked me, “Where have you come from?” I introduced myself.

He had an evening or night flight that day. Dr. Shehzad trusted me enough that after finishing his class, he said, “Let's go now, I will accompany you, and since my flight is in the evening, you can drop me off.” I still remember that we spent the entire day together on that first meeting. We sat by the seaside. Afterwards, I took him to my madrasah, where we walked around. And it was that very first meeting which introduced me to the practical dimension of this school of thought, and it made me realize that within this school, it is not just knowledge that exists, but the real essence is character, action, sincerity, and truthfulness.

2009, and now 2025; for approximately sixteen to seventeen years, there has been a daily relationship with Dr. Shehzad Saleem—conversations, dealings, and even crises and difficulties arose. But if you ask me what his greatest quality is, what his most significant service has been—people might name many of his books—then I say with complete honesty that if I were to mention only one thing, it would be this: in these sixteen years, I have never heard a single negative word from Dr. Shehzad Saleem’s tongue about any person. That is to say, it even happened that we ourselves witnessed that people committed grave injustices against him and subjected him to serious wrongs, yet never have we heard a single negative word from him about any individual, institution, or group.

So in my view, even if in these thirty-seven years he had done no other scholarly work, and if this one service alone he had upheld, then this alone would have secured for him the same value, respect, and honor in our hearts.

It is our institution’s good fortune and privilege that we are organizing this event. Behind it lies a vision, a thought that is actively at work. And in my collective efforts to advance this institution, I constantly keep in view—and strive to instill—the warning and caution that throughout the world, when institutions are established in support and service of religious thought, with the passage of time, the institutions themselves become the ultimate purpose. The institution becomes the beginning, and the institution becomes the end. The goals of the institution, its finances, its benefits, its image, its logos, its destination, and the praise and accolades it receives—all these become the ultimate aims and objectives of the people involved. However, our eyes bear witness that when individuals depart from these institutions, great movements, immense legacies, grand buildings, and monumental institutions come to resemble graveyards.

These institutions are composed of individuals, and people offer voluntary services to support and assist these individuals. This sequence must always remain in its correct order. On the day someone attempts to reverse or invert this order, these institutions will fall prey to the same kind of regression that we observe in religious institutions throughout the world.

Individuals hold importance, individuals offer support, individuals provide endorsement, individuals possess vision, individuals have an objective, individuals have a plan of action, and it is individuals who are the originators of this movement, the ones who carry it forward, the scholars of this thought, and the elders of this ideology.

In the end, I would just like to say that within this institution, our sole effort is to serve all of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s companions and students. We do so with dedication, without harboring any sentiment or notion that this service is some kind of favor upon them. This is a community built by them, it is the fruit of their labor that has been offered as a sacrifice for society, and which—through the form of these organizations—has been assigned to serve them. It is with this very spirit, God willing, that this process of service will continue.

I say what I have said, and I seek Allah’s forgiveness for myself, for you, and for all Muslims.



37 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE QURAN

Mukaram Aziz

Chair, Al-Mawrid US

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. First of all, I would like to thank honorable Javed Ahmed Ghamidi for participating in this event. I would like to welcome Dr. Shehzad Saleem on his arrival at our institution. It is an honor for us to have the opportunity to host Dr. Shehzad in this scholarly gathering. Along with this, I also extend a warm welcome to the esteemed scholars of our institution, whether they are present here or participating online.

After this, I would like to welcome the board members of the institution. Our Vice Chair, Mr. Ali, is present here. Likewise, several members of the General Body are also in attendance, and some are participating online. I also extend a warm welcome to our Executive Director, Mr. Farhan Syed, and the Director of Research and Communication, Mr. Hassan Ilyas.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Today's gathering is not merely to pay tribute to a scholar or a researcher, but to appreciate a living academic tradition. It is a matter of great joy and honor for me to be part of this occasion, on behalf of Al-Mawrid US and the entire organization, to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. Shehzad Saleem. A personality whose humility is as profound as his knowledge.

Dr. Shehzad has a scholarly struggle spanning 37 years. These are years during which numerous important works were produced, and the history of the Quran was brought to light with academic research and a spirit of truthfulness. These 37 years are, in fact, a transference of the scholarly tradition of Maulana Farahi, Maulana Islahi, and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi into a language through which the entire world may benefit.

Like all of you, I too am directly benefiting from this scholarly endeavor. From *Meezan* to *Al-Bayan*, from *Tadabbur-e-Quran* to *Al-Islam*, Dr. Shehzad Saleem's pen has served as a bridge between tradition and the contemporary age.

These are 37 years in which, even during an era of self-promotion, Dr. Shehzad Saleem made his work his identity. He carried the weight of profound knowledge, yet never sought fame. These 37 years are not merely about the words or message of the Quran, but about living with its true spirit.

These 37 years represent silent training and continuous guidance that transformed thousands of hearts and minds across the world through lectures, articles, online courses, Quranic courses, and workshops. These are 37 years of leadership free from arrogance. These are 37 years of scholarly service without pomp and show.

He is not merely a scholar of Al-Mawrid, but its driving spirit. He is not merely a guide on the path, but a constant seeker of the way of Allah himself. A personality who never claimed to have arrived, but always maintained a yearning to draw closer to the truth.

Today, we are remembering these 37 years not merely as years of work, but as years of selfless service to Allah and His religion.

In the end, on behalf of the Al-Mawrid US and from all of us, we sincerely pray from the depths of our hearts that Allah Almighty keeps Dr. Shehzad Saleem's path illuminated with the light of the Quran, that his words continue to serve as a source of guidance for us, that his silence becomes a sign of sincerity, and that his scholarly legacy forever remains a beacon for those who seek the truth. Ameen.

Thank you all.



PURITY OF HEART AND ACTION: IN BATTLE AND BEYOND

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. And blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, the trustworthy. I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Ladies and gentlemen!

My initial interest in the field of knowledge and literature has always been in the realm of literature, and within literature, there are dozens of genres in which people experiment with their creative expression. I, too, have had the opportunity to listen, read, and subsequently express my thoughts in both poetry and prose, and I have also expressed my views in some of these genres. However, there are two genres that I have never been able to approach; one is 'Qaseedah' (panegyric), and the other is 'Hijv' (satire or invective). By nature, I am not a person inclined toward praise and flattery, nor have I ever acquired the art of fault-finding.

Nevertheless, in fifty years of public life, I have participated in many such congregations where people speak about their companions, their teachers, and their elders in the same manner as I have heard today. Whenever I participated in such a gathering, I generally rose with the feeling that it had been a mutual admiration society. But today, for the first time, I feel that regarding the personality who is being discussed here, even after so much has been said, much remains unsaid.

In both poetry and prose, what our companions have already expressed—if that were to be doubled or even tripled—it would still perhaps fall short.

It is an undeniable fact that the services rendered by Dr. Shehzad Saleem in advancing this intellectual tradition are truly exceptional. Consider them from every angle: he has produced translations and, by doing so, conveyed to people—in the English language—the intellectual legacy of nearly the past century. The new insights that have emerged from this perspective, he has elucidated and clarified—both through his pen and through his speech. One only needs to glance at this contribution to recognize its worth.

In addition, he has rendered administrative services to our institution—services which were carried out during highly delicate and testing periods—and this too constitutes a luminous chapter of history. Indeed, if one were merely to recount the story of those ten to fifteen years, it would take the whole night, and even then, the morning would break while the tale remained unfinished.

Along with this, the character and conduct that Allah Almighty bestowed upon him are also extraordinary. Sincerity in the call towards the Lord, a true relationship with that Lord, living in this world with the consciousness of the Hereafter—these are not ordinary attributes. It is a fact that when I reflect upon the assets of my entire life, I wonder what I will present when I stand before the court of the Lord. The only source of courage I find is in the thought

that I may present Dr. Shehzad Saleem. It is also my own wish that when his work is acknowledged in the presence of Allah Almighty, if a small portion of that recognition reaches this humble person as well, then perhaps, following behind him, I too may be granted the opportunity to attain the pleasure of that Divine Presence.

I state this with complete honesty before you that his hard work, his sincerity, his relationship with Allah Almighty, and his character and conduct have always been a source of admiration for me, and I thank Allah that I was granted his companionship.

At this point in my life, I am at a stage where nothing can be said for certain about when the message from that Lord might arrive and I may be summoned to His presence. In such moments, it is the desire of every individual that if they have conceived any thought, undertaken any intellectual work, or left behind any tradition, then its custodians may uphold that tradition after them. I can say with complete confidence that if I have made an effort to produce even a few petals of a rose, then I have handed them over into their care, and I am fully content:

کہ گل بدستِ تو از شاخِ تازه تر مانند

That the flower in your hand appears fresher than the one on the branch

It is a fact that the struggle of the past thirty to thirty-five years in our context — if expressed in the style of metaphor — contains both moments of battle and moments of celebration. And it can be said about Dr. Shehzad Saleem, without fear of refutation, that:

رزمِ بو یا بزمِ بو، پاکِ دل و پاکِ باز

Whether it is the battlefield or the gathering, (he is always) pure of heart and pure of action.

اللَّهُمَّ أَرِنَا الْحَقَّ حَقًّا وَأَرِزْنَا اتِّبَاعَهُ وَأَرِنَا الْبَاطِلَ بَاطِلًا وَأَرِزْنَا اجْتِنَابَهُ

(O Allah, show us the truth as truth and grant us the ability to follow it, and show us falsehood as falsehood and grant us the ability to avoid it.)



A LOYAL FRIEND

Syed Manzoor ul Hassan

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem

Some thirty-five or forty years ago, the esteemed teacher Javed Ahmed Ghamidi said, “My friend, I am alone in the city of passion (mere Nadeem ma shehr Junoon ma tanha hoon),” and many young people responded to this call. These young individuals were embodiments of sincerity, love, and intellectual wisdom. After years of companionship, each one of them distinguished himself in some aspect. Some advanced in knowledge and erudition, others became towering figures in intellect and wisdom, some excelled in education and instruction, while others progressed in the field of research. Some demonstrated exceptional literary skills, others showcased administrative capabilities, and some stood out in piety and self-discipline.

Among them, however, there was one person who simultaneously possessed all these qualities. This is the individual whom the world knows by the name Dr. Shehzad Saleem. He is a teacher, an author, a researcher, a thinker, an administrator—in short, he attained excellence in all domains. It is said about Imam Farahi that when people met him, they could not decide whether his knowledge surpassed his piety or his piety surpassed his knowledge. The same is the case with those who meet Shehzad Saleem.

In the history of institutions, two kinds of individuals emerge: those who are born from within the womb of institutions, and those who themselves give birth to institutions. The latter hold the position of a father to those institutions. These are the people who nurture movements and institutions with their toil and sweat, foster them, help them grow, and raise them to the heights of excellence. If one considers the history of Al-Mawrid, then my brother Shehzad Saleem is counted among such individuals.

It is a moment of pride and honor for the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning that it has had the privilege of presenting the Lifetime Achievement Award to this great personality of our history. The fact is that Al-Mawrid US and the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning have come to occupy a trendsetting position in our missionary history, and this trend is directed purely towards dawah and admonition (dawat o indhar), and in support of the scholars. For this, the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning and Al-Mawrid US truly deserve heartfelt congratulations.

At this moment, I thought that I should attempt to express my impression of the honorable brother’s tale of steadfastness in a few verses. I was somewhat successful in this, but when the poem was completed, I realized that this impression had extended beyond the individual to include his companions as well. That is, the singular form of expression had shifted into the plural. In any case, I dedicate this poem to Mr. Shehzad Saleem. Its title is *Nadeem*. This title is borrowed from that poem of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, composed thirty-five to forty years ago in search of some companions. One of its verses is:

مرے ندیم کئی بار آخر شب میں
مرے چراغ کی لو میں بنی تری تصویر

(My companion, many times in the late hours of the night,
Your image was formed in the flame of my lamp.)

Nadeem

وادی شوق میں جب بجر کی رت گدرائی
قافلے والوں نے سامان سفر باندھ لیا
ساربانوں کے لیے بانگِ درا گونج اٹھی
پھر خدی خواں نے وہی درد کا نغمہ چھیڑا

When the season of separation blossomed in the valley of longing,
The caravan travelers packed their provisions for the journey,
The call to depart resounded for the camel drivers,
Then the chant leader began once again that same melody of pain:

ہیں کوئی شہر میں دو ایک وفا کیش ندیم؟
عمر بھر ساتھ نبھانے کا جو اقرار کریں

Are there any in the city, one or two loyal companions?

Who would pledge to stay for a lifetime?

بزم کو چھوڑ کے آمادہ تنہائی ہوں
اجنبی بن کے رہ دشت کو گلزار کریں
حالِ دل کہہ کے، جدا رہ کے، ستم سہم سہم کے
زندگی میری طرح اور بھی دشوار کریں

They should be prepared to leave the gathering and embrace solitude,

To turn the desolate path into a blooming garden as strangers.

By expressing the state of the heart, by remaining apart, by enduring torment after torment,

And make their life even more difficult, just like mine.

تادم مرگ رہیں صدق و صداقت کے نقیب
حق کہیں، حق کی منادی سر بازار کریں
رہ نوردوں کو تعصب سے گریزاں کر کے
علم و اخلاق و محبت کا طلب گار کریں

Be heralds of truth and honesty until the moment of death,

Speak the truth, proclaim the truth openly to the world.

Make travelers shun all prejudices,

To transform them into seekers of knowledge, ethics, and love.

مجھ سے برہان خداوند کا تیشہ لے کر
 قصر تقلید کو بنیاد سے مسمار کریں
 وارث ورثہ پیغمبر آخر ہو کر
 ذکر قرآن سے اس قوم کو انداز کریں

Take from me the chisel of the proof of the Lord,
 And demolish the edifice of blind imitation from its very foundation.
 Being the inheritor of the legacy of the Last Prophet,
 Warn this nation through the remembrance of the Quran.

ہم نے اس نادِ جگر سوز پہ لبیک کہا
 ہم نے اس نغمہ دل گیر کو ایمان جانا
 اُس زمانے میں کہ جب رخ پہ مسیں بھیگتی ہیں
 رنج کو چین کہا، درد کو درمان جانا

We responded to this soul-searing call with Labbayk.
 We considered this heart-rending melody as faith itself.
 In that age when the first signs of youth begin to blossom on the face,
 We took sorrow as peace, and regarded pain as a cure.

اجنبی بن کے رہے بزمِ گمِ عالم میں
 فقر کی راہ لی اور روح کو درویش کیا
 شوق نے جب بھی محبت کی گواہی مانگی
 نقدِ دل نذر کیا، ہدیہ جاں پیش کیا

Lived as a stranger in the grand assembly of the world,
 Chose the path of spiritual poverty and rendered the soul ascetic.
 Whenever longing sought testimony of love,
 Offered the currency of the heart, presented the gift of life.

پھر زمانے کی روایات بدلنے کے لیے
 ہم اٹھے ولولہ علم و ہنر تازہ کیا
 علم و اخلاق کے خرمن سے اٹھا کر موتی
 رہ نوردوں کے لیے رختِ سفر تازہ کیا

Then, to transform the traditions of the age,
 We rose and renewed the passion for knowledge and artistry.
 From the treasury of knowledge and ethics, lifting up pearls,
 We prepared anew provisions for the journeyers of the path.

حرف و آہنگ کیے سوز دروں سے لبریز
 ہر رگ ساز میں پھر خونِ جگر تازہ کیا
 کوہِ فارانِ ضیا پاش کی وضو پاشی سے
 خفتہ خاکستر مسلم میں شرر تازہ کیا

Words and melodies were infused with the fire of the heart,
 In every vein of the lute, fresh lifeblood was poured.
 By the radiance streaming from Mount Faran's light,
 In the dormant ashes of the Muslim, a new spark was stirred.

سال ہا سال اسی جہد مسلسل میں کٹے
 اب ذرا ضعف کے آثار نظر آتے ہیں
 قافلے والوں کا تاحال سفر جاری ہے
 ہم مگر نقش بہ دیوار نظر آتے ہیں

Years and years were spent in this continuous struggle.
 Now, signs of weakness have begun to appear.
 The caravan's journey still goes on unbroken,
 But we appear as mere imprints upon the wall.

اللہ الحمد، پڑاؤ کا مقام آپہنچا
 ہم سبھی خاکِ مقیموں کا خدا حافظ ہو
 اور جو راہِ محبت میں ابھی نکلے ہیں
 اُن وفا کیش ندیموں کا خدا حافظ ہو

All praise is due to Allah, the destination of the journey arrived.

May God protect all of us dwellers of dust.
 And those who have just set out on the path of love,
 May God protect those loyal and devoted companions.

A DEVOTEE OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS: THE FOLLOWER OF PROPHET IBRAHIM (PBUH)

Dr. Khalid Zaheer

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Khurram Murad, a venerable figure of Jamaat-e-Islami, would often remark that if one wishes to assess a religious or scholarly personality, then in his view the most important criterion of their success is how many successors they have nurtured. In this regard, my esteemed teacher, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, stands out prominently, for he has produced a remarkably long list of students.

This journey began in the mid-1970s with a cohort that he taught, followed by another in the early 1980s in which I was included, alongside Naeem Baloch and several others. Then, towards the late 1980s, there was yet another group, among whom were Dr. Shehzad Saleem and some other companions.

Since then, the process has continued in such a way that—praise be to Allah—it has flourished unceasingly, as we say in Punjabi: *chal so chal* (let it keep going and growing). May Allah make it ever more effective and blessed. Yet, there remains no doubt that in this entire journey, in this caravan, the most distinguished figure has been Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

I am relating to you a reality: when a person leaves behind all worldly opportunities and devotes himself entirely to a higher purpose, and he feels that others too are accompanying him in this journey, then the sense of competition is only natural—it cannot be avoided. This is a difficult stage, much like running a race in which some competitors are ahead, some behind, and some running alongside. The matter, however, becomes much easier when someone surges far ahead; at that point one says to oneself, “Now, *nothing more can be done*.” This is precisely what Dr. Shehzad Saleem did with people like us—he moved far beyond.

There are many reasons why Dr. Shehzad Saleem outpaced others. Among his qualities is one described repeatedly in the Quran with reference to Abraham (PBUH): a state of complete devotion and single-mindedness. This devotion gave rise to steadfast perseverance. As has already been noted, although he completed his engineering studies, he had no real interest in obtaining a degree for worldly purposes, nor did he ever take up employment. He had resolved firmly that this—service to the faith—was his life’s work. This clarity of purpose within him was truly exceptional.

To this was added his tireless labor. Of course, there may be other hardworking individuals among human beings—I am sure there must be; I have heard that even among the jinn such tireless ones exist—but his level of effort was extraordinary. Whenever I reflect upon it, the thought that comes to mind is that there is no comparison. It was, indeed, something quite exceptional.

He left no stone unturned in the pursuit of knowledge. I still recall that, from the very beginning, whenever there was an opportunity to benefit from the company of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi or to learn from him, he was always at the forefront. He would undertake translations with such remarkable speed that, at times, we jokingly remarked

that perhaps Javed Ahmed Ghamidi would compose his writings later, while their translations by him would already have appeared. Such was his zeal, such was his dedication—it was truly amazing.

Equally striking was his cheerful disposition—indeed, it was exemplary. Naturally, in any institution there are many individuals, along with their differences and difficulties. Yet this servant of God was altogether unique: everyone would turn to him to express their disagreements or share their problems, and he would invariably become a source of help and support. To sustain bonds of affection and effective communication with so many people simultaneously is an extraordinary quality.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to him on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award. There is no doubt that he is truly deserving of this honor. May Allah Almighty grant him ever greater success in this world and in the Hereafter.



DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM: A TRANSLATOR, SCHOLAR, AND MENTOR

Dr. Ghitreef Shehbaz Nadvi

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

In the contemporary era, alongside the traditional curricula of Dars-e-Nizami, Nadwat al-Ulama, and Salafi seminaries, Muslims have experimented with another model of religious education at different times and in diverse settings. Although these efforts have been attempted on varying scales, the outcomes have been strikingly positive. The model was this: to provide modern education to bright and capable students first, and thereafter impart to them advanced religious training—foundational instruction in the Arabic language, and in-depth study of the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence. At times, certain institutions and groups undertook this initiative, and at times, individual students pursued it on their own accord.

Those who, after undergoing this experiment, chose service of religion as their life's objective proved to be far more effective than conventional seminary graduates. In view of the demands of the present age, they were able to serve religion with greater relevance and efficacy. This experiment produced outstanding men of learning, and examples of such figures can be found across various Muslim intellectual traditions. Among them one may cite: Maulana Syed Abul A'la Maududi, Dr. Nejatullah Siddiqi, Dr. Abdul Haq Ansari, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, Maulana Tariq Jamil, Dr. Israr Ahmad, the late Mr. Khalid Masood, and others. Our esteemed honoree, Dr. Shehzad Saleem, also belongs to this modern cadre.

Among the scholars and researchers of Al-Mawrid, the Institute of Islamic Research, with whom the present writer has had interaction, Dr. Shehzad Saleem occupies a distinctive place. Due to his humility and reticence, as well as the limitations of available sources, little is known about his personal and family background. Nevertheless, the information gathered about his scholarly contributions may be presented here in brief.

Dr. Shehzad Saleem was born in 1966. He is an Islamic scholar and researcher. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, and later completed his doctorate in the history of the Quran at the University of Wales, UK. He pursued his religious training under the supervision of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. From 1992 to 2008, he served as an Associate Fellow at Al-Mawrid, a unique institute of Islamic research and education in Pakistan, and since 2008 has been serving there as a Fellow.

Academic Milestones

Doctorate

Dr. Shehzad Saleem earned his PhD from the University of Wales on the subject of the "History of the Quran." His dissertation dealt with the compilation and arrangement of the Quran, variant readings, scribal errors, and

the study of different manuscripts. This project, completed over eight years, is in English. There is a pressing need for its translation into Urdu and Arabic. In view of this need, selected chapters have recently been rendered into Arabic and published in Ishraq.

Major Translations

Dr. Shehzad Saleem is a master of translation. He translated and abridged volumes IV–VIII of Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi's Quranic commentary *Tadabbur-e-Quran*, the magnum opus of the Farahi school. In addition, he translated Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's Quranic exegesis *Al-Bayan*, his seminal work on Islamic thought *Meezan*, as well as his concise introduction to Islam, *Al-Islam*, into English.

Research and Teaching

He also prepared a modular syllabus on Quranic studies, which was taught to graduate students between 1999 and 2001. Furthermore, he delivers lessons on Al-Bayan in English and lectures regularly on a wide range of formative and training-related topics.

To reach the pinnacle of Quranic research at the University of Wales is itself no small feat. Employing modern methods of historical criticism, he has not only given new dimensions to the study of Quranic history, but also presented to the English-speaking world the magnificent scholarly heritage of Islam on the Quran.

His training and personality-development lectures typically cover themes such as:

Charity, humility and the repudiation of arrogance, remembrance of God, civic responsibility, kindness to parents, gratitude, forgiveness, moral courage, honesty, avoidance of ostentation, humility, empathy, refraining from sinful speech, integrity, justice, loyalty, and the like.

English Works

Dr. Shehzad Saleem has authored extensively in English on a broad range of subjects, including: the Quran, Hadith, the Prophet's life, Islamic beliefs and practices, responses to criticisms of Islam, the Quran's textual history, Islamic guidance on family life, Islamic political and social teachings, misconceptions about jihad and divorce, interfaith dialogue, intellectual freedom, critical thinking, parenting, youth challenges, and the psychology of militancy. His writings, often published as booklets or monographs, include:

1. Critical History of the Quran
2. Misconceptions about Women in Islam
3. Interfaith Dialogue
4. Selected Biblical Verses
5. Questions on the Quran by Serious Students
6. Misconceptions about Islam
7. Muhammad (PBUH): The Misunderstood Prophet of Islam
8. Marriage and Married Life
9. Basic Morality
10. Islam and the Islamic Welfare State
11. Misconceptions about Divorce in Islam

12. Misconceptions regarding Jihad of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH)
13. Imbalanced Religious Attitudes
14. Intellectual Freedom and Critical Thinking
15. Parenting
16. Challenges Faced by the Youth of Today
17. The Mind of a Muslim Militant

Style of Speaking

Dr. Shehzad Saleem is a gentle orator and an excellent teacher. He speaks every language with the accent of its native speakers: his Persian resembles that of Iranians, while in English he is fluent and polished. Besides teaching Al-Bayan in English, he also addresses practical life issues, personal growth, and parenting in his lectures.

Online Lectures and Courses

In 2003, he established a pioneering email-based Islamic query service (IQAS), which by that year had already responded to over 3,000 questions. Earlier, in 1998, he had launched a distance-learning program for Al-Mawrid—an innovative step when online religious education was still rare. In 2003, he founded the website www.studying-islam.org, which offers online courses in English and Urdu on Islam. Today, it has more than 15,000 registered students worldwide and hosts nearly 50 courses.

He also developed dedicated websites on the lives and works of Quranic scholars:

- www.hamid-uddin-farahi.org
- www.amin-ahsan-islahi.org
- www.tadabbur-i-quran.org, launched in 2013 on Islahi's Tadabbur-e-Quran
- www.abdus-sattar-ghauri.org, launched in 2014 on the Biblical scholar Abdus Sattar Ghuri

Renaissance

Dr. Shehzad Saleem is the founding editor of the Islamic monthly Renaissance, launched in 1991. Its website was initiated in 1999 (www.monthly-renaissance.com). In addition to its regular issues, special editions have appeared on such themes as “Islam and Non-Muslims: A New Perspective,” “Islam and Women,” “Islamic Political Guidance,” “Islamic Economic Directives,” “Understanding Islamic Punishments,” and “The Teachings of the Quran.” For over three decades, Renaissance has been published continuously under his editorship. Each issue typically includes an editorial, Quranic lessons, commentary, and one or two scholarly articles, written in a highly accessible yet refined style.

Distinctive Contributions

Dr. Shehzad Saleem's specialization in English has enabled him to bring the light of Islam—particularly in the vision of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi—to a global readership, especially the younger generation. His service to the Quran is complemented by a deep engagement with Hadith studies. Not only has he studied the classical tradition, but he has also benefited from the works of non-conventional Hadith scholars whose research was often neglected by mainstream religious circles—for example, Maulana Tamanna Imadi, Mufti Abdul Latif Rahmani,

and Allama Shabbir Ahmad Azhar Merathi. His discourse is reasoned, well-supported, and intellectually appealing to the youth.

His command of English is such that he even composes poetry in it—poetry of a refined and constructive nature. The publication of translations and summaries of major Quranic exegesis in English is itself a monumental achievement, for English is the global lingua franca. To publish in English is to be read and benefitted from worldwide.

In sum, Dr. Shehzad Saleem has single-handedly accomplished what large academies and institutions often aspire to do.

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi has, in the prefaces of some of his works, expressed gratitude to his close companions and students, and among them he has mentioned Dr. Shehzad Saleem with special appreciation. The invaluable services Dr. Saleem has rendered to Ghamidi's thought, and to Islamic scholarship more broadly, merit due recognition. It is therefore most fitting and timely that Al-Mawrid US has resolved to honor him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. In the same spirit, Ishraq America has dedicated a special issue in his name, thus setting a worthy precedent.



AN INCOMPARABLE DISCIPLE OF THE TEACHER

Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

It is a great honour for me to be invited to speak at this gathering held in recognition of my elder brother and very dear friend, Dr. Shehzad Saleem. My close association with him spans nearly twenty years, though our acquaintance goes back even further. Our first meeting was, I believe, in 1991, when I had the privilege of visiting our esteemed teacher for the first time. On that occasion, Dr. Shehzad was also present.

The scholarly contributions of his, which have been mentioned here and which are well known to academics, to members of the institution, and to readers at large, are in themselves remarkable. Yet, in my own companionship with him, I have had the opportunity to witness closely his human and personal qualities, to benefit from them, and to take delight in them. In my estimation, these qualities are an even more valuable asset. The body of intellectual work that exists is, after all, a result; what is more important to emphasize are the personal and scholarly attributes within him that produced these results.

In a brief note I wrote recently, I stated that the most precious quality of Dr. Shehzad, which deserves the highest appreciation, is his relationship with his teacher. Beyond the personal bond, what is truly unique is the scholarly connection through which he bound himself to his teacher. We can say, without exaggeration, that throughout his journey he never once let go of his teacher's guiding hand. In constant connection and correspondence with him, learning from him in every matter, in every detail, he completed his intellectual journey. This unwavering commitment, this deep trust in his teacher, and this passion for learning from him—these, in my view, are the most admirable qualities. I believe that among the circle of our teacher's disciples, this degree of devotion and fidelity is unparalleled.

The second trait I observed while working with him is his extraordinary commitment to his work, his ability to lose himself completely in it, and to devote his entire being to it. To set aside rest and even health for the sake of work, to pursue it with such relentless determination—this quality in him is truly exceptional. Very few people display such commitment, giving themselves wholly to their vocation and labouring with such intensity. In our days together at Al-Mawrid, I had frequent opportunities to learn about the projects he was working on, the sources he was studying, and the materials he was preparing. God Almighty has granted him both extraordinary capacity for work and an equally extraordinary spirit of dedication.

As for his personal character, it is nothing short of exemplary. He embodies humility and deep modesty—not only in his personal interactions but also in his intellectual life: in learning from others, in listening to criticism, and in refining his work in light of it. To combine high scholarly competence with genuine humility is a rare quality, and one that is integral to his character. These two or three aspects, in my view, greatly elevate his stature and endear him all the more to my heart.

The significance of his scholarly contributions is evident to all. In furthering the thought of our teacher, and in fulfilling the intellectual tasks required in light of that thought, he has consistently and on a very large scale made

his share of contributions. In this respect, the institution's decision is entirely appropriate. Indeed, I must first congratulate the institution itself for making arrangements to fulfill this duty of acknowledgment, and then extend my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Shehzad Saleem for this well-deserved recognition.



THE MORNING STAR OF GHAMIDI'S THOUGHT

Naeem Ahmad Baloch

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

The 1980s occupy a place of great significance in Pakistan's history. Though under military rule, the country experienced a decade of relative political stability, during which a certain degree of intellectual, economic, and social development was visible. Among the youth, there was at the same time a marked inclination toward religious studies and religious movements. To examine the causes of this phenomenon, with its many positive as well as negative aspects, is not our present concern.

Among its most harmful religious consequences, however, was that under government patronage a highly distorted conception of jihad spread among the younger generation—indeed, it became something of a 'fashion.' This had catastrophic repercussions, not only for Pakistan itself but for the entire world. Yet a limited positive feature of that era was that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, television programs on religious studies began to be broadcast. Among these, the lectures of Dr. Israr Ahmad (may God have mercy on him) proved to be a major means of awakening in the younger generation an interest in understanding the Quran.

Dr. Shehzad Saleem may be counted among those youth. It was through the influence of Dr. Israr Ahmad that he first turned toward the Quran. The associates and admirers of Dr. Israr Ahmad fell broadly into two categories: those who were drawn to the project of Islam's political resurgence, and those who were primarily interested in Islamic sciences—above all, in the comprehension of the Quran. Brother Shehzad belonged to the latter group: he attached himself to Dr. Israr with an extraordinary passion and eagerness for understanding the Quran, and in his heart had already resolved to make mastery of Islamic sciences the great goal of his life.

It was in 1988 that certain questions arose in his mind regarding the comprehension of the Quran and the religion of Islam. Since a principal source of Dr. Israr's scholarship was Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi's exegesis *Tadabburi-Quran*, Shehzad was advised that he might obtain answers to his questions directly from Maulana Islahi himself. He then learned that Maulana Islahi delivered weekly Quranic lectures at the residence of Ms. Nisar Fatimah (the well-known politician Ahsan Iqbal's mother, and Maulana's sister-in-law) in Fazliyah Colony, Lahore.

Dr. Shehzad Saleem began to attend these lectures. At the conclusion of one lecture, he requested special permission to pose his questions. To his deep disappointment, however, he discovered that Maulana, due to impaired hearing, could not follow his words easily. He then tried to submit his questions in writing, but even this did not yield the desired outcome. On that occasion, another of our dear friends, the late Anees Mufti, was also present. God Almighty had endowed Mufti with a rare gift: the ability to discern latent potential. With his sharp insight, he not only perceived within Shehzad Saleem the deep passion for seeking truth, but also recognized his innate nobility of character.

He observed that out of deference and modesty, Shehzad Saleem was unable to raise his voice sufficiently, and thus even with a hearing aid, Maulana Islahi could not properly hear him. When he resorted to writing down his

questions, the circumstances remained such that, owing to Maulana's advanced age, effective communication could not be established. Nor could Shehzad Saleem fully convey his sense of dissatisfaction at not being properly understood. Somehow, he managed to ask a few essential questions, but the thirst for knowledge was still visibly etched upon his face.

At that moment, Anees Mufti stepped forward and told him about our esteemed teacher, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi—himself a direct disciple of Maulana. He suggested that if Dr. Shehzad Saleem so wished, he could approach Javed Ahmed Ghamidi to find satisfaction for all these intellectual yearnings.

Once a thirsty soul discovers where the well lies, how could he possibly stop? Soon, Dr. Shehzad Saleem was seated before Javed Ahmed Ghamidi at 51-E, Model Town, Lahore—and it seems, even to this day, that he has never left that place.

History, in a sense, repeated itself. Just as our teacher had once approached Maulana Islahi and been told: “Grasping the purport of the Quran is not overly difficult; true Quranic insight, however, is something else entirely—for at times even one's own shadow deserts him in this pursuit,” so too did Javed Ahmed Ghamidi recognize, within only a few meetings, that Shehzad's fervent yearning was ready to pay this very price. And the rest, as they say, is history.

This was the period when Al-Mawrid—the caravan of Islamic learning that had begun in 1982 from a small shop in Fortress Stadium—had, after enduring the turns of time and grappling with society's indifference, grown somewhat weary and paused briefly to draw breath. For those of us who had joined this journey earlier, our regular study circles had become irregular, and each had retreated into his own corner.

Yet behold the divine decree: around the same time, several other courageous and gifted students joined this new cohort alongside Dr. Shehzad Saleem. Among them, the names of our brothers Moiz Amjad, Asif Iftikhar, and Rauf Haider shine most prominently.

I remember well how, among us older companions, there was much talk about Dr. Shehzad Saleem's bold and striking arrival. I myself was especially eager to meet him. For that purpose, I went to see him at the University of Engineering and Technology. To speak candidly, I went intending to warn him. I had learned that this young man, then in the final year of his civil engineering studies, was prepared to abandon his education unfinished. Since I had taken such a step in the past and suffered its unpleasant consequences, I thought it appropriate to advise him that although no price is too great for this path, wisdom demands that one not increase the obstacles, but rather seek to lessen them.

Yet, the firmness of his resolve and the clarity and confidence of his plan left me with little to say. I returned with the happy sense that the journey of our once-halted caravan was about to begin anew. And indeed, soon after, news came that our esteemed teacher, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, had placed full trust in the sincerity and abilities of Dr. Shehzad Saleem and his fellow newcomers. With this fresh cohort, and with the cooperation of the late Altaf Mahmood, Al-Mawrid—the institute of Islamic learning—resumed its journey toward its intended destination with renewed determination.

Altaf Mahmood was a longtime friend of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, and in religious work he extended generous financial support, even to the extent of taking loans for this purpose. Alongside him were Moiz Amjad, Asif Iftikhar, and other fresh companions who joined this revived caravan of Al-Mawrid. Reflecting on this very period in his essay *Qafila dar Qafila*, our esteemed teacher wrote:

After 1987, a period of trial and interruption also passed over Al-Mawrid, but, thanks be to Allah, since its revival in 1991 through the efforts of our friend Altaf Mahmood, its work has never again suffered disruption.

Dr. Shehzad Saleem's command of the English language, owing to his education at Aitchison College, gave Al-Mawrid a new direction. In 1990, he launched the English journal Renaissance. Although Moiz Amjad and Asif Iftikhar too had an educational background in English, the decree of Providence and their own acknowledgment of his irresistible passion, expressed so aptly in the poet's words—

*One must witness the restless ardor of longing,
For the breath of the sword extends beyond the blade itself*

had already destined this laurel to be placed upon Dr. Shehzad Saleem's head.

Not only Renaissance, but he also undertook the translation of nearly all of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's works into English. With the exception of only a few writings, there is hardly any book of our teacher—*Meezan*, *Al-Bayan*, *Al-Islam*, and many others—that he has not translated. This was truly the work of an entire institution, yet Shehzad Saleem carried it out single-handedly. His equal proficiency in Arabic and Persian further enabled him in this monumental task. Under the tutelage and guidance of our esteemed teacher, he traversed the valleys of learning in his unrelenting quest for knowledge.

By this time, Dr. Shehzad Saleem had become the Chief Executive of Al-Mawrid, and under his leadership the institution had begun to flourish with renewed vigor. Looking back, it seems to me that in those very years Al-Mawrid began to take on the form of a modern university of Islamic studies. Many new students had joined its fold, among whom a prominent name is that of Dr. Muhammad Aamir Gazdar. During Dr. Shehzad Saleem's tenure, countless chapters of success and achievement were written—so many that an entire book would be needed to encompass them. While gathering and preserving the scholarly legacy of his teacher, he also continued his own academic work, writing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Wales (UK) on the history of the Quran, now published in book form.

Who better than Dr. Shehzad Saleem to know that the caravan set in motion by Shibli and Farahi had been nurtured into a flourishing tree by Amin Ahsan through *Tadabbur-e-Quran*; and that Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, in turn, had cultivated and tended it with such devotion that he strove to fulfill the dream of those elders—that this caravan of knowledge and insight might keep journeying backward through time until it was once more joined with the era of the Companions. For them, the essential purpose of religion was purification of the soul. And today, when we look at our revered teacher, we find ourselves in wonder whether his knowledge is greater or his character. In precisely the same way, Dr. Shehzad Saleem carried forward the same legacy of his teacher. Though he had joined the caravan later than many others, he soon surpassed them all—so far ahead that none could deny it. His precedence was not only in knowledge and organization, but also in the bonds of affection. From senior associates of the institution to its junior workers, all regarded his leadership as that of a faithful servant. Never did he withhold help from anyone whose pain or difficulty came to his attention and within his reach.

Dr. Shehzad Saleem's tenure of leadership, however, was brought to an end by the very tragic circumstances I alluded to at the outset. The decade of military rule had begun to reveal its deadly consequences. The culture of jihadism had grown into a monstrous dragon of terrorism, and its foremost enemy was none other than that school of thought and consciousness which alone possessed its most effective response—the institution of Al-Mawrid.

After four of its companions were bathed in blood, even the life of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi was at risk. Though he was unwilling to abandon his post, the enemy was so ruthless and unscrupulous that it was prepared to grind wheat and chaff alike. At last, the teacher was compelled to migrate. Yet out of this calamity Al-Mawrid re-emerged with a new form and color. The enemy sought to constrict its space on earth, but the Lord of the worlds opened for it the expanse of the heavens. Today, Al-Mawrid has become the voice of God's religion across the five continents.

After Javed Ahmed Ghamidi himself, Dr. Shehzad Saleem is the only scholar who is connected with every institution of Al-Mawrid. He is the very apple of the eye of each of them. In recognition of his extraordinary services, Al-Mawrid US and Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning arranged a gathering to confer upon him the Lifetime Achievement Award—an expression of their love and esteem for him. As Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir so beautifully remarked, it is the good fortune of this award itself that it has been adorned by being placed in the lap of Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

On this occasion, a prose poem is presented in his honor:

A Lifelong Devotion

You called upon Truth with all the strength of your heart and soul;
 In the ocean of divine verses
 You sought the anchor of the spirit.
 Your life passed in the quest for fidelity,
 At every turning,
 The Quran cast its light upon your steps.
 The storms of trial kept blowing,
 Yet your lamp never went out.
 The candle of conviction
 Stood firm against the darkness.
 This Word of God
 Became for you the dawn's radiance,
 Rising as a ray of morning
 in every night of gloom.
 The insight of your eyes
 Brought solace to many hearts,
 Your devotion
 Turned love into passion.
 Our prayer is that
 You always walk in the light;
 May the Quran's eternal radiance
 Ever illumine your heart and soul.

A SCHOLAR WHO LIVES HIS KNOWLEDGE

Kaukab Shehzad

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

When it comes to Dr. Shehzad Saleem, I could speak either from an intellectual perspective or from the practical side of life—for in both respects his personality is truly complete. Alongside fulfilling the rights of God, he has always been mindful of the rights of people. Even if I am at times upset with him, deep in my heart I still admire him, for he always speaks the truth. Whenever he comes to know that he could be of help to someone, he does so quietly, without even letting the other person realize it.

When I first married him, he was so immersed in his reading and writing that there was hardly any conversation between us. I have never seen anyone work as hard, academically, as he does. Hours upon hours he would sit in the same position, focused on his work. Now, of course, I am used to it. Let me share one incident: when we would go to pick up our son, Ibrahim, from Aitchison College, Shehzad would be proofreading papers in the car. Ibrahim would feel embarrassed and say, “My friends ask me—does your father do anything other than study all the time?”

As for my own journey, whatever little contribution I have been able to make in the service of faith has been entirely because of Shehzad’s support. I don’t think any woman could get this much time for academic work alongside household responsibilities if it weren’t for a husband’s full cooperation. I remember our late-night Ramadan transmissions—he never once stopped me, never said, “Not at this hour, you cannot go.” Whenever I was called, Shehzad always supported me wholeheartedly. In this regard, I am deeply grateful to him. Whatever I am today, I owe it to my father, my teacher, and my husband. He has always stood by me in life, and at the same time, remained fully committed to his own mission.

These days, however, I see something new in him—though perhaps he might not like me saying it. He seems to be turning more and more towards asceticism. His eating is very simple, he keeps just a few clothes, and there is a visible detachment from worldly concerns. It feels as if he is becoming increasingly indifferent to the material world.

My prayer—and may your prayers join mine so that they are surely accepted—is that Allah grants him good health and continued strength in his scholarly work. May Allah always keep him surrounded by His blessings, with his son, with his friends, and, at the end of it all, with me as well.



THE STANDARD-BEARER OF THE AGE OF COMMUNICATION

Rehan Ahmad Yusufi

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

If the Quran were to be described in a single sentence, it is that this Book is the introduction of God that He Himself has given. This introduction is not God's need, but humanity's. When a person succeeds in awakening within himself a living awareness of the majesty of God's essence and the sublimity of His attributes, he too becomes elevated and exalted. This exaltation reaches its ultimate culmination in the eternal nearness of the Peerless God in the Gardens of Paradise.

Tragically, in every age, the teachings of prophets have been altered and interpolated, thereby changing the very essence of their message, its precision, and its original emphasis. To address this, finality of prophethood was decreed, and with it, the text of the Quran was divinely safeguarded from alteration. This extraordinary arrangement ensured that the Quran has reached us today in precisely the same form in which the Seal of the Prophets (PBUH) entrusted it to his community.

Yet the path of additions outside the text was not closed, for such was necessary as a trial for human thought. The result, however, was that the Quran, though theoretically recognized as the primary source of religion, was practically marginalized. Unreliable and extraneous material was given precedence over this divinely preserved Book. The consequences of this distortion form a long and detailed history, but here brevity requires us to pass them by.

What needs to be stated is that at the dawn of the twentieth century, Divine providence raised a personality whose task it was to establish—on the firm foundation of reason and argument, not merely on reverence—the rightful position of the Quran; to clarify the divine arrangement of its preservation; and to remove the external obstacles that obscured its understanding. That towering figure was Imam Hamiduddin Farahi—undoubtedly an ayah among the signs of God. Yet, the extraordinary labors he rendered in the service of the Quran might have remained confined to scattered notes, fragmented pages, and Arabic treatises, had not destiny granted him in his later years a brilliant young disciple in the person of Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi.

It was Islahi who transformed Farahi's Quranic thought into the monumental commentary *Tadabbur-e-Quran*, clarified the principles of reflection upon the Quran, and applied them to multiple branches of Islamic learning, yielding groundbreaking insights which he recorded in his other works. His contribution was, in itself, immense, opening the door of reflective engagement with the Quran. But the destination intended by Divine will still lay ahead—that the entire inherited corpus and system of religious thought be critically examined, cleansed of accretions, and that the original religion, unalloyed and unadulterated, be presented afresh to the world. Only such a pure religion possesses the full capacity to respond to the challenges of both polytheism and atheism. To accomplish this mission, Divine providence blessed Maulana Islahi, in his final years, with a disciple in the person of our esteemed teacher, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. He absorbed the entirety of this Quranic vision and authored *Meezan*, a work of singular significance. *Meezan* is the presentation of that pristine religion—free of

interpolations—which the Messenger of God (PBUH) bequeathed to the world. Even if Javed Ahmed Ghamidi had produced nothing else, *Meezan* alone would suffice to secure for him a place of extraordinary distinction in the fifteen centuries of Muslim scholarly tradition.

What I have written thus far serves merely as a prelude—an introduction to that personality whom the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning has chosen to honor with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Our reference is to Dr. Shehzad Saleem, who, without exaggeration, is a most deserving recipient of this recognition.

In my view, there are certain qualities in Dr. Shehzad Saleem that distinguish him from among all the disciples of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. The first and most important is precisely the point with which we began this essay: the Quran is the self-disclosure of the Almighty, and an authentic awareness of it ennobles a person's own being. On the basis of a personal association spanning over three decades, I can affirm without hesitation that Dr. Shehzad is himself a noble and exalted personality. Much could be said in support of this, but whatever is said, his character and conduct outshine it. The bond between a servant and his Lord is deeply personal, and acts of devotion at the level of supererogatory worship often remain hidden from the public eye. Yet the manifestations of kindness, cooperation, generosity, and moral excellence in his dealings with people are such that ordinary men like ourselves can only aspire to them; attaining to such a station is exceedingly difficult.

The second defining aspect of his personality lies in his extraordinary services to the Quran. The Quran introduces itself as the *Meezan* (Balance) and *Furqan* (Criterion). It declares that it is the guardian and arbiter over all other religious sources, and that its preservation has been ensured by the Lord of the worlds Himself. Yet, alongside the canonical text of the Quran, certain variant readings (*qirat*) have also come to be regarded as equally Quranic. In fact, in recent decades, the publication of Qurans containing such variants in Arab countries, coupled with their widespread circulation through television and social media, has armed every critic with a sharp weapon and raised unsettling questions in the minds of thoughtful Muslims.

Farahi, Islahi, and Ghamidi each addressed this matter in their own way. However, Dr. Shehzad Saleem devoted many years to a rigorous study of the subject, employing the well-established principles of textual criticism to demonstrate that the Quran is one and only one, and that its text is definitive and final. At the same time, he carefully examined the history of other variant readings and clarified their actual status and the reasons for their circulation. This research, conducted in the English language, is of immense value, for it communicates to a wider, non-Urdu-speaking audience the Quranic perspective of the Farahi school in a thoroughly academic style.

A third major dimension of his service is the elucidation and explication of the works of our esteemed teacher, as well as of Farahi and Islahi, and their translation into English. This task he has undertaken in every possible form—through prose and poetry, writing and speech, teaching and instruction. He addresses not only the English-speaking world but also the Urdu-speaking audience. To accomplish this, he has availed himself of every means modern circumstances have placed at our disposal: online and classroom sessions, social media conversations, books and journals, public dialogues and Q&A forums.

Another striking facet of Dr. Shehzad's personality is his unwavering dedication to his mission: his steadfastness in his work, his rare ability to maintain active communication with people despite immense scholarly engagements, his habit of setting clear goals and pursuing them to completion, and his skill in managing responsibilities of seemingly conflicting natures—all of these combined have transformed one individual into an institution unto himself.

This essay has already grown lengthy, though much remains unsaid about Dr. Shehzad's many qualities. To summarize: in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, as the Farahi school of thought transitioned from its age of research into its age of communication, among the learned men entrusted with the role of leading this

caravan, Dr. Shehzad Saleem stands out as the most comprehensive in qualities and the most remarkable in personality. Our prayer to God Almighty is that He grant him health, long life, and that through his knowledge and character the Muslim community continue to be blessed. Amen.



MY HERO IN RELIGIOUS STEADFASTNESS

Moiz Amjad

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

Most of you are already well aware of Dr. Shehzad Saleem's intellectual and scholarly accomplishments. My association with him, however, predates the time when our revered teacher, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, entered our lives. We have known each other since childhood, and in fact, he is my maternal cousin.

The greatest inspiration I have drawn from Dr. Shehzad Saleem came at the moment when he chose to commit himself to a religious life. That single decision brought about a complete revolution and a sweeping transformation in his personality. This change, however, was not readily welcomed within our family. We were not particularly religious; our religiosity, at most, extended to observing prayer and fasting. But growing a beard, wearing a cap, adopting a distinctive style of dress, changing one's social circles, and standing against the cultural traditions in which we had been raised—these things were not viewed favorably in our family.

As a result, Shehzad Saleem faced considerable discouragement in those early days. His new way of life was not merely disapproved of; the disapproval was open and pronounced, and I witnessed it myself.

What struck me most, and what inspired me deeply, was Shehzad's response to all of this. Despite being so young at the time, his attitude was marked by restraint, reflection, deliberation, and wisdom. For me, this was truly extraordinary. I was left wondering: how does faith give a person such strength—that he endures everything with such patience, dignity, and composure? To me, this remains the most inspiring aspect of his life, and it is because of this that Dr. Shehzad Saleem is my hero. Even today, I long to reach the level of character and resolve that he had attained at that time.

May Allah grant him ease in his life and elevate him to the station he truly deserves, God willing. May Allah grant him His eternal Paradise, and grant me too the grace to join him there.



AN ACCOUNT OF MY ASSOCIATION WITH DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Muhammad Zakwan Nadvi

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

It is indeed a moment of great joy that today Dr. Shehzad Saleem is being honored for his services. Many congratulations are in order. This is a truly happy occasion for him, and he is, in every sense, most deserving of this recognition.

What is most commendable is that this establishes a better tradition: that those who have devoted their entire lives to a cause and rendered invaluable service should be acknowledged during their lifetime, not—as is unfortunately customary with us—only after their passing, through condolence gatherings. To appreciate and celebrate such individuals in their life is a much greater thing. For this, my heartfelt congratulations once again.

In fact, it was through Dr. Shehzad Saleem that I first came to know of Al-Mawrid and of the entire intellectual legacy associated with it. When I say legacy here, I do not mean it in the mystical sense of a Sufi order, but rather in the scholarly sense—the school of thought of Imam Farahi, the *Silsilah Farahi*.

The reality is that I was a seeker—one in search of answers to intellectual and religious questions. When I discovered that there was an institution called Al-Mawrid where such questions could be addressed, I managed to obtain their email. This was, I believe, around 2013. For the very first time, I contacted Dr. Shehzad Saleem by email. I asked him: “Could you please tell me the name and email of a member of your team with whom I could correspond about my questions, so that I may continue to learn?” His reply astonished me. He said: “You can ask any of our team members.”

This was a moment of surprise and delight for me—what an exceptional thing, for such a team to exist! Normally, such openness is unheard of in our context. After that, I continued to correspond with him regularly by email. This was before the days of WhatsApp. Remarkably, he would respond to every query, promptly and concisely, with admirable clarity. This quality—of brevity combined with precision and promptness—is rare indeed. Thus, as a student, I benefited immensely from him. May Allah reward him abundantly, and bless his life, health, and every endeavor.

Later, I also benefited from Rehan Yusufi, and thereafter from our brother Hassan Ilyas, with whom I remain in contact to this day. In fact, my first introduction to Hassan Ilyas was through his recorded Q&A sessions with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi on the subject of Hadith. When I first heard his voice—so captivating and compelling—I was drawn to know more. I inquired from both Dr. Shehzad Saleem and Rehan Yusufi about him: “Who is this young man? Could you kindly share his contact?” They informed me that this was likely Hassan Ilyas, and soon thereafter I was able to establish contact with him as well.

What I wish to emphasize here is that Dr. Shehzad Saleem is a shining example of how one can truly recognize oneself and, upon recognizing one's path, remain steadfastly committed to it. From the very first day of joining the company of his teacher, he came to know himself and fixed his gaze firmly upon that road. He has since remained unwavering on it. The result, by the grace of God, has been a series of remarkable contributions from his pen. Most recently, his monumental work History of the Quran has appeared—a truly magnificent achievement. I had even requested that it be translated, at least for the benefit of the Urdu-speaking audience, so that these insights may reach them as well.

This is all I wished to share. May Allah Almighty reward all of you who have gathered here today, and may this honor be a source of joy and blessing for Dr. Shehzad Saleem. Thank you all.



MY FIRST TEACHER IN THE FARAH SCHOOL

Dr. Irfan Shehzad

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

I am deeply grateful for these precious and honorable moments, in which even a junior companion like myself—and to be called a “companion” is itself a great honor for me—has been given the opportunity to speak at this gathering.

The noble qualities that adorn the personality of Dr. Shehzad Saleem are well known to all of us. For me, however, there is an additional honor: within the Farahi school of thought, he was my very first teacher.

When I was first introduced to this intellectual tradition, I corresponded with Dr. Shehzad Saleem for almost a year, asking him questions one after another, to which he always responded. During that period, one particular incident left me deeply astonished. On one occasion, I asked him regarding one of his replies: “Should it not rather be understood in this way?” To my surprise, he immediately responded: “Yes, you are right.”

For a senior scholar of his stature to accept, without the slightest hesitation, the correction of a junior student like myself was something entirely unexpected. Yet this humility and openness is among his greatest qualities. Alhamdulillah, my student–teacher relationship with him continues to this day: whenever I send him questions, he replies promptly and with generosity. May Allah grant us the ability to follow in his footsteps and adopt these noble traits ourselves.

The decision to honor Dr. Shehzad Saleem with a Lifetime Achievement Award is indeed an excellent one. I am certain that such accolades make little difference to him personally, but for us and for the institution, it is a great honor. By appreciating and recognizing his services, the institution has set a wonderful precedent.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations both to Dr. Shehzad Saleem himself, and to our teacher Javed Ahmed Ghamidi whose guidance we all share. Thank you very much.



A MODEL OF NOBLE CHARACTER

Farhan Saiyed

Executive Director, Al-Mawrid US

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

Strictly speaking, I may not have the standing to speak in this gathering, yet my long and deep bond of friendship and affection with Dr. Shehzad Saleem compels me to say a few words about him.

Dr. Shehzad Saleem is a multifaceted personality: a father, a brother, a son, a teacher, a scholar, and a translator. But today I would like to briefly touch upon three defining dimensions of his life.

First, his unwavering commitment and relentless effort in the pursuit of truth. Many scholars have spoken about this, and will continue to do so in an academic way. I will only share one simple story. When he completed his engineering degree at UET, his connection with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi had already been established, and he began working alongside him. Such was his focus that he never even bothered to go back and collect his diploma. Years later, a student of his—by then in a senior institutional position—told him, “Sir, your diploma has been lying here for twenty years. At least come and collect it.” Yet Dr. Shehzad Saleem never turned back toward worldly pursuits. That is the measure of his focus on the quest for truth.

Second, his extraordinary capacity for maintaining relationships and bonds of affection. I have known him, and the institution, for about twelve years. From Australia to Pakistan, from England to other parts of the world—wherever I have met people—I have not found a single individual who carries a complaint against him. Quite the opposite: everyone speaks of him only with admiration. This is a rare quality indeed. To never speak ill of anyone, and to be so universally praised in return—that is an achievement far greater than it seems.

Third, his moral character. I often say to people that my aspiration in life is to one day become, in terms of moral integrity, like Dr. Shehzad Saleem. It is truly amazing. Without fear of exaggeration, I can say that he embodies the very same moral excellence we read about in the earliest Muslims—those exemplary figures whose stories of character still inspire us today.

Our dear Ammar Khan Nasir once wrote on Facebook that it is the award itself that is honored by being given to Dr. Shehzad Saleem. I fully agree. Yet, beyond this, I believe that his true Lifetime Achievement Award lies in his moral being and in the affection he has cultivated with people. My earnest hope—and my heartfelt prayer—is that on the Day of Judgment, Allah grants him the eternal Lifetime Achievement Award, admitting him among the righteous and the nearest ones, and that we too are blessed to be in his company there.

Thank you.

AN AMBASSADOR OF KNOWLEDGE AND A MESSENGER OF FAITH

Hamza Ali Abbasi

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

Given the personality and the work of Dr. Shehzad Saleem, he undoubtedly deserves this award. The awards of this world are one thing, but—by God’s grace—I firmly believe he will be deserving of reward in the Hereafter as well.

His scholarly contributions are significant in at least two ways:

First, he has translated much of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s literature into English. For people like us—who may not be comfortable with highly sophisticated Urdu, or who grasp ideas more easily in English—this has made understanding religion much more accessible. This alone is a great service: he has rendered the work of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi into simple English, thereby opening it up to a much wider audience.

Second, beyond translation, he has also played a crucial role in disseminating this body of work and making sure it reaches people far and wide.

Third, his style of communication and explanation is a blessing for common people like us. He has the gift of taking complex religious knowledge and presenting it in a simple, clear, and well-summarized way.

Even as a non-scholarly student, I had a very special experience with him. He gave my book personal attention and spent time with me one-on-one, teaching me much. This, I believe, speaks volumes about his character. Whoever comes to him to learn about faith—whether a scholar or an ordinary person like myself—he listens with full attention, sincerity, and seriousness, and responds with care.



A PORTRAIT OF COMPASSION, RESOLVE, AND PERSEVERANCE

Imtinan Ilahi

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

I have known Dr. Shehzad Saleem for nearly forty years. Forgive me—it is difficult for me to distinguish between addressing him as “*aap* (you)” or “*tum* (you).” Still, I will try to refer to him with the respect he deserves as “Dr. Shehzad Saleem.”

We were classmates at the University of Engineering and Technology. My roll number was 29; his was 14. We share many memories from those days, most of which revolve around Shehzad’s innocence and purity of character. Everything that has been said in this gathering about his fine morals and conduct is absolutely true—I can fully attest to it.

One trait that stood out to me early on was his deep sense of compassion for others. Human beings, of course—but even animals. If he happened to see a dog being beaten or suffering from hunger, he would be visibly saddened. Let me clarify: in America, love for pets is part of the culture. In Pakistan, however, dogs are rarely cared for in that way. Dr. Shehzad’s kindness was, therefore, something extraordinary in our context.

Another defining moment was his decision to embrace a religious life and then remain steadfast in it. This was truly exemplary. Coming from a well-educated, modern family background, one would hardly expect such a choice, yet Dr. Shehzad left all that behind and, with full sincerity, remained committed to the path he believed to be the truth. I once read a Persian line: “This blessing is not attained by mere effort of the arm—it is a gift from God.” Indeed, this was a great gift of God.

A third quality is his unwavering commitment. There was no external pressure on him to remain tied to religious work—no financial constraints, no other compulsions. It was, at its core, sincerity, compassion, and a deep belief in the vision of this institution that enabled him to serve so consistently and wholeheartedly.

When he set out on this path, a few of our other friends also chose the same way. But among them, Dr. Shehzad Saleem alone has remained fully dedicated—steadfast and resolute in this mission. May God continue to elevate his rank, grant firmness to his resolve, and enable him to keep serving the cause of faith in this manner. Ameen.



“THE CULTURE OF AL-MAWRID” — MY TRUE BENEFACTOR

Dr. Shehzad Saleem

On the occasion of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony for Dr. Shehzad Saleem.

First of all, let me confess with complete honesty that at this moment I am utterly overwhelmed with a sense of embarrassment. Listening here today to all that has been said about me, I am reminded of a statement by Imam al-Ghazali which seems entirely apt for my situation. He once said: *Allah has veiled my faults—though I have many—and out of His special grace has allowed one or two of my virtues to appear prominent before people*. My case is no different. My shortcomings have been concealed, and whatever little good there is has been highlighted.

The reality is that a person is not what others say about him, but what he manifests in his moral existence—especially in the eyes of his family and closest companions. My wife is attending this program online, and she too spoke a few words about me, with generosity and restraint. But if I may speak on her behalf, she often tells me candidly—and even if she hadn’t, I would still affirm it myself—“As a human being you are good, but as a husband you are quite poor.” With complete frankness I admit: as a son, as a brother, and as a father, I have failed to live up to the responsibilities of these relationships. I did not expend the effort and dedication that they deserved. Now, as I approach sixty years of age, I openly acknowledge that I have not done justice to these ties. This will remain a source of regret for me, and I can only pray that Allah, in His mercy, forgives me for this shortcoming.

As for what you are today calling my achievement—if indeed there is any—it is not my personal doing. It is the product of a culture, a nurturing environment which I call the “Al-Mawrid Culture.” And so, I dedicate this award to the institution of Al-Mawrid, which reared me, gave me opportunities, and allowed me to bring forth whatever capabilities Allah had placed within me.

Al-Mawrid was founded in 1983, and by the grace of Allah, after 2015 its presence spread to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Germany. It embodies a distinct culture—one I wish to briefly describe before you.

I first became acquainted with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi in 1988. Even before that, I had resolved to become a student of religion. But there was no suitable platform for me—neither the traditional madrasa nor the Islamic International University in Islamabad was a viable option. When I met Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, the most delightful realization was that Al-Mawrid offered precisely such a place: a space where a seeker of knowledge could express his abilities and passion in the service of faith. Here, no one was forced into blind imitation. Whether in Quran, Hadith, jurisprudence, history, or dawah—each individual was free to choose his field of interest and pursue it.

This gave me great courage. I chose the Quran as my primary focus, while also engaging with other disciplines, and for the past 35 years I have striven in this path. All of this was possible only because the institution facilitated me at every step, allowed me to make choices in line with my aptitudes, and assured me that its resources would be there to support my endeavors.

When seen against the wider backdrop of Pakistan's cultural and religious landscape, this is extraordinary. Where else can one find an institution of religion that stands not to impose but to facilitate; that nurtures your passion rather than stifling it; and that provides you a platform to serve in the way your abilities allow? For me, Al-Mawrid has been precisely that platform, and it is to this culture that I owe everything.

Furthermore, I was always the recipient of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's affection and encouragement. I still recall how he deputed his senior students to instruct me, so that I might learn the Arabic language and other sciences from them. This, too, gave me great strength and confidence.

Indeed, the greatest blessing is the provision of opportunity—and that is precisely what I found here. At times, a person harbors deep aspirations within, yet is deprived of the platform to realize them. In my understanding, the hallmark of our institution is that it brings together both passion and opportunity, and extends this to everyone. All of our colleagues—some of whom are present here today, while others are attending online—will testify that wherever they sensed their potential to grow, or in whichever field they felt capable of serving—whether in research, teaching, education, or writing—the institution opened that path before them and stood in full support of their endeavors.

For me, this has played an extraordinary role. And this is not the experience of one individual alone; rather, without fear of contradiction, every member of this institution will affirm it. You have seen their work, you will continue to see more, and they too have been blessed with the opportunity to express themselves in accordance with their passion. This passion culture is the first hallmark of this institution.

The second distinctive feature is the realization that the true essence lies in a person's morality and character. If this dimension is deficient, the possession of religious knowledge cannot compensate for it. One must first and foremost become a good human being. This was the lesson our teacher impressed upon us again and again—with great detail and at numerous occasions, both in public and in private. He repeatedly hammered into us the principle that the foundation of everything is character and morality, which we must cultivate within ourselves. I refer to this as the Moral Culture.

In the Moral Culture, one is tasked with building one's inner character. The gaze must be turned inward, not outward—don't look outside, look within. It is the very principle Socrates emphasized when he said: Know thyself. Only after this self-awareness does it become possible to reform the inner human being. And there is but one path to this: self-criticism. It is through constructive criticism of oneself that one attains moral refinement.

To achieve this, it is essential to establish a deep connection with the Quran. One must not be distracted by the behavior of others, nor justify one's own negligence by citing their waywardness; rather, one must concern oneself with one's own inner state. The Quran enjoins: عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ — “Upon you is [the responsibility of] your own selves.” Our teacher always reminded us that true success lies in reforming the inner human being, and this reformation is brought about by the Quran.

I would like to share with you a verse of Iqbal, which I first heard from our teacher's tongue:

کشتن ابلیس کار مشکل است
زانکه او گم اندر اعماق دل است
خوش تر آن باشد مسلمانش کنی
کشته شمشیر قرآنش کنی

To slay the Devil is a most arduous task,
For he lies concealed in the depths of the human heart.

Better it is to convert him into a Muslim—

To subdue him with the sword of the Quran.

From this institution we have learned that knowledge, if unaccompanied by character and morality, becomes nothing but a burden. Self-criticism, self-accountability, and attachment to the Quran constitute the true path of growth. This is why the Quran alone is the ultimate fountainhead, and piety and moral excellence are the true fields of competition: *وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ* — “In this, then, let those who aspire, compete with one another.”

If there is any arena worthy of striving, it is the arena of piety, morality, and character. When we advance in this sphere, God Himself aids us therein. From our teacher I learned that if our inner vessel is sound and pure, God will pour knowledge into it; but if in His sight the vessel is unclean, He will not bestow knowledge upon it. Thus, under all circumstances, it is incumbent upon us to keep our moral being pure and untainted. This is the second lesson I learned from the Al-Mawrid culture.

The third lesson I derived from the Al-Mawrid culture is what I call the Dialogue Culture. Placed in the context of thirty or forty years ago, this was an utterly novel phenomenon. In Pakistan—even today—most religious institutions are dominated by blind conformity: whatever the head of the institution declares must be accepted without question. At Al-Mawrid, what held us back from such a mindset was the principle that discourse must rest upon evidence and reasoning. On that very basis of reasoning, we both agree with our teacher and, at times, disagree with him—openly and candidly.

The natural outcome of this Dialogue Culture is that discussion and even disagreement must be grounded in argument. Agreement and disagreement are ordinary matters; what truly matters are the etiquettes of disagreement. One must allow the other person the leverage of possibly being correct, while placing oneself in the position of possibly being mistaken. The benefit of this disposition is that dialogue can continue even amidst sharp differences, even with those who outright deny the existence of God or hold false notions about Him.

In genuine dialogue, the goal is not that the other must necessarily abandon his stance and adopt yours. Rather, one presents one's findings before the other, while respecting the findings that he presents. Convincing the other party is not, in itself, the purpose of dialogue. Regrettably, this element is absent in most religious institutions, where blind following still dominates. In Al-Mawrid, however, discourse is rooted in reason. It is this which has taught us patience, tolerance, and the etiquette of respectful disagreement.

The fourth lesson is what I term the Critique Culture. Our teacher would always emphasize: first subject yourself to criticism, and then listen to the criticism of others with an open heart. Never regard criticism directed at you as insignificant.

There are two kinds of criticism:

The first is self-criticism, which leads to personal growth. Whenever one realizes a mistake, it must be corrected without hesitation.

The second is criticism from society. This, too, is immensely valuable. Whether it comes through journals, the media, or any other channel, one must examine it carefully, understand it, and reform oneself accordingly.

If ever we were negligent in this regard, our teacher would question us: “Have you read that critique? Have you seen what was written?” For this reason, our constant effort was to study every critique before meeting him, because he would surely inquire: “So-and-so has said such-and-such—what is your response?” This is a tremendously healthy approach, for it saves one from the delusion of self-importance. It reminds us that the world abounds with brilliant minds, and that we are neither the first nor the last of them. It positions us at a place where the only thing that matters is the pursuit of truth—wherever it may be found, from whomever it may come.

If I were to give an overarching title to all these facets of al-Mawrid culture—which I have termed “Passion Culture, Moral Culture, Dialogue Culture, and Critique Culture”—I would call it the Truth Culture, or simply: the pursuit of truth. It is a journey of constantly moving from good to better, and from better to best. On this path, one must adopt some things and let go of others.

In speaking of Al-Mawrid, I must mention one personality in particular. When the institution began in 1983, it continued steadily until 1986, when financial difficulties arose. I, along with some other colleagues, joined in 1988, and by 1991 the institution was revived. The person chiefly responsible for that revival was Mr. Altaf Mahmood—may God envelop him in His mercy. A few years ago, he passed away due to Covid. I can never forget his words; even today, whenever I recall them, I get goosebumps—my hair stands on my skin. He once said: “Look, we are starting this institution. I will divide my income into three parts: one part will go to al-Mawrid, one to my business, and one to my household. And I have made it a principle that if ever a crisis comes, the institution will be supported first.”

Because of his sacrifices, during my 25 years of administrative responsibility (1990–2015), there was not a single day when salaries were delayed. Today, when we see the institution standing firm and moving forward with such continuity, we cannot forget the pioneering role of Altaf. Similarly, there were others—Mr. Anees Mufti, Dr. Farooq Khan, Mr. Rashid Farooqi, and Mr. Ishaq Nagi. Though they are no longer in this world, they, along with many other friends, played their part—often beyond their means—for the institution. After 2015, Al-Mawrid experienced global expansion: institutions were established in five countries—USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and Germany—and our vision became institutionalized. A recurring tragedy of the Muslim Ummah has been that once a prominent individual departs, the institution collapses—it is, as they say, a one-man show. To safeguard against this, a deliberate effort was made to establish institutionalization in the truest sense, so that the departure of individuals does not mean the demise of the institution. Today, for instance, Mukaram Aziz is here with us; he now leads Al-Mawrid USA with the same passion. Likewise, dedicated volunteers in Canada, Australia, Britain, and other countries continue this mission—each of them striving beyond the call of duty.

I share all this because many among you are high achievers. Were I given the authority to nominate someone for a lifetime achievement award, the list would be very long indeed. My wish is that every person on that long list should be honored, for their contributions are invaluable. Yet in truth, ultimate praise belongs to God alone. And the worldly success He grants us ought to deepen our humility.

Let me end with this reminder: the real success is not this award. The real success is what the Quran describes:

فَمَنْ رُخِّرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ

Whoever is saved from the Fire and admitted into Paradise—that is the one who has truly succeeded. (3:185)

That is the true achievement: to stand honored before God, saved from the fire of Hell, and admitted into His Paradise. I would therefore say in relation to this award: whether it is given to us or not, in every case we must make it our target to become good human beings. That is the summit of humanity, and toward that summit we must strive.

Emily Brontë once said:

Twas grief enough to think mankind

All hollow, servile, insincere;

But worse to trust to my own mind

And find the same corruption there.

And Bahadur Shah Zafar expressed the same truth in these couplets:

نہ تھی حال کی جب ہمیں اپنے خبر، رہے دیکھتے اوروں کے عیب و ہنر

پڑی اپنی برائیوں پر جو نظر تو نگاہ میں کوئی برا نہ رہا

When I was unaware of my own state, I looked only at the faults and merits of others,

But once my gaze fell upon my own flaws, then no one seemed blameworthy in my sight.

The essence of reform lies in self-reform. This is the central message I have learned from the Al-Mawrid culture.

With this prayer I take your leave: May God grant us all success in His presence, and may we be truly honored before Him.

Thank you very much.



THE STORY OF A LIFE: DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

A Conversation of Mr. Muhammad Hassan Ilyas with Dr. Shehzad Saleem

Hassan Ilyas: In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate. A student from the Ghamidi Center is present before you. We are fortunate that one of the eminent scholars of our school of thought, Dr. Shehzad Saleem, has graciously come to the United States at our request. In recognition of his lifelong services, our institution has conferred upon him the Lifetime Achievement Award. This ceremony was broadcast on social media and received a wide response from the people. In today's sitting, I wish to engage in a candid conversation with Dr. Saleem about his personal life—things which are generally not discussed in scholarly gatherings—so that we may hear them directly from him. Let us begin. Brother Shehzad, Assalamu Alaikum. I trust you are well?

Shehzad Saleem: Wa Alaikum Assalam. Alhamdulillah, yes.

Hassan Ilyas: Thank you very much, Brother Shehzad, for sparing the time. My intention today is not to raise academic or intellectual themes. Rather, I would like to exchange thoughts, in an informal manner, regarding the journey of your life. To begin with, kindly tell us about your family background: how did your interest in the religious sciences develop? What led to your first meeting with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, and when did that meeting take place?

Shehzad Saleem: In fact, the turning point of my life was the year 1981, when my father passed away. I was fourteen years old at that time—a lively, though studious, boy for my age. I shared a close friendship and deep affection with my father. His sudden departure from this world was an event of immense impact upon me—it was something that really changed my life. That incident transformed me completely.

As a result, fundamental questions about life began to arise in my mind: Who are we? Where have we come from? What is the purpose of our coming? What is life? What is death? These questions gripped my heart and mind with intensity. In search of answers, I turned to the study of philosophy. Yet I realized that instead of answering those questions, philosophy generated even more questions.

Thus, I resolved to pursue a formal education in religion. At that time, the International Islamic University in Islamabad was just being established. We used to live in Rawalpindi–Islamabad with my father, but after his death we had to move to Lahore. Since my sisters were still very young, I could not take the step of enrolling in the Islamic University at Islamabad. Instead, I secured admission in Electrical Engineering at the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore—but my heart continued to long for religious learning.

This desire led me to Dr. Israr Ahmad. However, his institution was more action-oriented than knowledge-oriented. Its primary emphasis was on missionary and reformist goals, which reflected his own disposition. Although there were some one-year and two-year academic courses offered, I felt they would not quench my thirst. I wished to go very deep, to acquire knowledge in its profoundest sense.

Around that time, I came to know that Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi was a distinguished scholar and was delivering lectures in Lahore. So, I began attending his sessions. He suffered from hearing impairment in those days. After the lectures, a question–answer session would be held: one had to write the question on paper and present it to him, and he would respond. I also attempted this, but naturally such an arrangement did not allow for real dialogue. By chance, our old associate, the late Anis Mufti—may Allah have mercy on him—was present there. He said, “Since you find difficulty in asking questions directly to Mawlana, it would be better for you to go to Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. He is himself a student of Islahi, and he lives nearby, in Model Town, not far from here (Ferozepur Road).”

Hassan Ilyas: So, your first introduction was with Islahi, before you met Javed Ahmed Ghamidi?

Shehzad Saleem: Yes, exactly.

Hassan Ilyas: What was your father’s profession? Did he reside in Pakistan, or had he migrated from India?

Shehzad Saleem: My father was a Chartered Accountant. His family belonged to Punjab. My mother was from Meerut, but her family migrated to what later became Pakistan in 1945. The reason was that my maternal grandfather, Dr. Qazi Saeeduddin, was offered in 1945 the opportunity to establish the Department of Geography at Punjab University. Thus, he founded the Department of Geography there and became its first head.

Hassan Ilyas: That means your grandfather was indeed a distinguished and well-educated personality.

Shehzad Saleem: Yes, he had completed his PhD from University College London under the supervision of the renowned geographer Dudley Stamp.

Hassan Ilyas: I see. Now let us move forward. Tell us, what was the factor that initially drew you towards Dr. Israr Ahmad?

Shehzad Saleem: Before mentioning Dr. Israr Ahmad, I should acknowledge another individual who first turned my attention towards the Quran. That was Professor Muhammad Azmat—he is, by the grace of Allah, still alive. At that time, he was teaching at Government College, Lahore. Actually, when we moved from Rawalpindi to Lahore, we shifted into the haveli of my maternal grandfather. The neighborhood where this haveli was located happened to be the same area where Professor Azmat resided. He had a great passion for the Quran. His recitation was beautiful, and he used to lead the Friday prayer in the local mosque. With much affection and care, he nurtured in me a deep love for reading the Quran.

As for Dr. Israr Ahmad, it was probably around 1984–85 that I began going to hear him at Masjid Darus-Salaam in Bagh-e-Jinnah. At that time, I was a student at the University of Engineering and Technology. I found that his discourse was logical, his manner of speaking was modern, and he could speak English well too. Soon afterward, I also began attending regularly at his institution, Quran Academy, in Model Town. I later came to know that one of my maternal uncles had been his class fellow at King Edward Medical College. In any case, I continued to listen to him, but matters did not move beyond listening. He wished me to join his system of bay‘at (pledging allegiance of hearing and obedience). However, given my educational background, I had already been exposed to modern intellectual trends. My mind could not accept the idea of binding oneself to a person in unquestioning obedience. So, although I attended his lectures and Quranic sessions, my temperament was never inclined towards pledging bayt. Around that time, the “Islami Jamiat al-Tulaba” (Islamic Students’ Organization) was founded. It

quickly became very active in the Engineering University, attracting a large circle of students. Dr. Israr placed great expectations upon it. The extent of its influence in the university can be gauged from the fact that when the time came to appoint a city leader for Lahore, one of my classmates from the Engineering University was entrusted with that responsibility.

Meanwhile, I had also met both Amin Ahsan Islahi and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. Among the very first questions I posed to Javed Ahmed Ghamidi was precisely this matter of bayt involving hearing and obedience. On that occasion, an interesting incident occurred: after I conveyed to him Dr. Israr's viewpoint in my own words, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi remarked, "This does not make sense to me." Obviously, it was a critical remark, but I interpreted it at first to mean that perhaps he had not properly understood Dr. Israr's perspective. However, in subsequent sittings, he explained that the Hadith upon which Dr. Israr based this demand—"I command you with five things which Allah has commanded me: adherence to the community, hearing and obedience, migration, and striving in the path of Allah"—relates, in fact, to the domain of government and state.

As a result, the entire edifice of Dr. Israr's thought on this matter collapsed. One immediate consequence was that the circle of "Islami Jamiat al-Tulaba" within the university dispersed, and within merely eight or nine months of its formation, the organization dissolved. Naturally, this was a serious setback for Dr. Israr's work, for he had believed that this movement would become highly influential among the youth.

Hassan Ilyas: Understood, that is now clear. Let us move ahead. Usually, when people experience a religious transformation, the first effects appear in their lifestyle, habits, outward demeanor, and clothing. You came from a modern family background. When this change occurred in your life, did it also manifest outwardly in such ways?

Shehzad Saleem: When this religious transformation took place, I was still too young for facial hair. Then, around 1986–87, when some hair began to grow, I decided to keep a beard. I still remember: the decision was made after Dr. Israr had delivered a lecture on the subject of the beard. I was so deeply moved that I resolved never to shave again. When I informed my family, an uproar broke out at home. My mother was particularly opposed. She had already been watching with concern for the past four or five years that I was gradually drifting from the track she expected, but at least my outward appearance had remained unchanged. Now, when I announced this decision, she grew very worried. Since my beard was still sparse at that time, when it became visible it looked extremely untidy. A similar situation arose with regard to clothing. I used to wear trousers, but it was difficult to keep the hems above the ankles. To resolve this, I asked my mother to instruct the tailor to stitch my trousers with higher hems. My mother objected, saying, "That will spoil them, and they will look bad." So I devised a solution of my own: I folded the hems upwards and fastened them with a stapler.

In addition, I began to wear a Jinnah cap on my head. You can imagine what my mother and family must have thought: below were trousers folded and stapled layer upon layer, on my head was a Jinnah cap, and on my face an unruly beard. I had adopted this appearance believing it to be a very important requirement of religion.

Hassan Ilyas: You mentioned that your beard was sparse. It seems to me that many of the senior scholars of our school of thought have been granted sparse facial hair by Allah. Perhaps there is some hidden wisdom in this too. Anyhow, let us move forward. Tell us: when you first met Javed Ahmed Ghamidi almost forty years ago, where and how did that meeting take place? What was he like at that time?

Shehzad Saleem: At that time, he was living in House No. 51-E, Model Town.

Hassan Ilyas: Did you get an appointment before going to meet him?

Shehzad Saleem: No, I did not take any appointment. The very day I learned, at Islahi's lecture, that he lived nearby, I decided immediately to go meet him. So instead of returning home, I went straight to Model Town.

My cousin and I set out on a motorcycle, and in a short while we arrived at his house. Just as I was about to ring the doorbell, my eyes fell on the road: I saw a gentleman walking with very measured steps, wearing a light mesh cap on his head, his gaze cast downwards. I thought to myself, perhaps this is Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. Indeed, he saw us, opened the door, and welcomed us warmly. He seated us kindly. I told him that I had just attended his teacher's lecture. He was very pleased. Then he listened attentively to my words and asked me several things. From that day until today, our bond has remained. It was, as Shakespeare says:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.*

In human life, there are moments when a tide rises, and if one rides upon its flow, it carries him onto the current of great fortune. For me, that day was such a moment of felicity granted by Allah. When I first married him, he was so immersed in his reading and writing that there was hardly any conversation between us. I have never seen anyone work as hard, academically, as he does. Hours upon hours he would sit in the same position, focused on his work. Now, of course, I am used to it. Let me share one incident: when we would go to pick up our son, Ibrahim, from Aitchison College, Shehzad would be proofreading papers in the car. Ibrahim would feel embarrassed and say, "My friends ask me—does your father do anything other than study all the time?"

As for my own journey, whatever little contribution I have been able to make in the service of faith has been entirely because of Shehzad's support. I don't think any woman could get this much time for academic work alongside household responsibilities if it weren't for a husband's full cooperation. I remember our late-night Ramadan transmissions—he never once stopped me, never said, "Not at this hour, you cannot go." Whenever I was called, Shehzad always supported me wholeheartedly. In this regard, I am deeply grateful to him. Whatever I am today, I owe it to my father, my teacher, and my husband. He has always stood by me in life, and at the same time, remained fully committed to his own mission.

These days, however, I see something new in him—though perhaps he might not like me saying it. He seems to be turning more and more towards asceticism. His eating is very simple, he keeps just a few clothes, and there is a visible detachment from worldly concerns. It feels as if he is becoming increasingly indifferent to the material world.

My prayer—and may your prayers join mine so that they are surely accepted—is that Allah grants him good health and continued strength in his scholarly work. May Allah always keep him surrounded by His blessings, with his son, with his friends, and, at the end of it all, with me as well.



KNOWLEDGE AND MORALITY INTERTWINED — DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Saqib Ali

This essay is based on impressions gathered from Dr. Shehzad Saleem's lectures as well as my personal observations. In shaping it into written form, I have availed myself of assistance from AI (ChatGPT). —The Author

My First Encounter

My first introduction to Dr. Shehzad Saleem took place in 2013 through a short clip on YouTube. At that time, I carried the notion that a person without a beard or traditional Islamic appearance could not be considered a true scholar. Yet, when I listened to him, that perception shattered. It became clear to me that piety and knowledge are more intimately tied to the inner self than to outward appearance.

Though I could not benefit extensively from his books, I consider it my good fortune that I have listened to countless lectures and clips of his. What follows in this essay is entirely based on insights and reflections derived from those lectures.

Analytical Study of the Quran

Among Dr. Saleem's most valuable contributions is his series "Analytical Study of the Quran." In it, he selects certain verses and presents excerpts from leading classical and modern commentaries. Through comparative analysis, he demonstrates the perspectives adopted by different exegetes.

The greatest benefit, in my view, is that this nurtures in students the ability to form judgments on the basis of evidence. I vividly recall that it was only through these lectures that I first truly understood the intricate issues of inheritance discussed in Surah al-Nisa. Prior to this, my repeated attempts had not led to clarity. But when Dr. Saleem illuminated these points and responded to students' questions, all my confusions dissipated.

For those who wish to understand the Quran—especially students inclined toward the Farahi school of thought—this series holds extraordinary importance.

Islam Study Circle

Another highly significant series of his is the "Islam Study Circle." It was through this that I first became acquainted with the Bible. While we frequently study the Quran and Hadith, it was astonishing for me to learn that the Bible, too, contains passages of profound wisdom and reflection. This realization dawned on me through Dr. Saleem's discourse.

In this series, he brings together selected passages from the Quran, Hadith, and the Bible, shedding light on them in a manner that consistently emphasizes moral refinement. And rightly so, for the Prophet (PBUH) declared that on the Day of Judgment, the heaviest matter on the scale will be good character. In today's age, when Muslims face an undeniable moral crisis, his repeated emphasis on ethics assumes even greater significance.

Another unique aspect of this series is its interactive format. Dr. Saleem addresses questions from the audience, offering brief yet satisfying answers. At times, instead of Q&A, an entire session is devoted to a focused theme—for instance, “How to control anger?” Students then present their opinions one by one. This process yields threefold benefits: it compels independent reflection, it exposes one to multiple perspectives, and it culminates in a balanced and collective understanding.

Clearing Misconceptions about Islam

Equally invaluable to me has been his YouTube series “Misconceptions about Islam.” Consisting of nearly five hundred short videos, it tackles complex questions with remarkable clarity in just a few minutes. Listening to his answers, one feels that intricate problems are untangled and difficult questions rendered accessible.

A student who diligently follows these clips will find that many of his misunderstandings about Islam are dispelled. These videos, in fact, serve as an essential gateway to understanding the Quranic hermeneutics of the Farahi school.

Dr. Saleem as a Poet

Reading Dr. Shehzad Saleem's poetry feels less like encountering words and more like inhaling the fragrance of morality and beholding the light of character. His verses revive that expansive vision of religion in which the moral refinement of the human being stands at the center. He reminds us that faith is not confined to acts of worship; it is a complete code for purifying the heart, disciplining the self, and spreading goodness in society.

A distinctive charm of his poetry lies in its simplicity of English—fluid, transparent, and accessible, as though a spring of knowledge flows equally for all. A student can not only acquire refined English from his poetry but also absorb the sentiments and emotions it embodies—feelings often absent in the dry prose of books, yet flowing palpably through his verse.

Thus, his poetry is not a mere collection of words; it is a mirror reflecting the beauty of the soul, the true spirit of religion, and the noblest heights of humanity.

Nurturing the Bond with God

Dr. Saleem's discourse does not confine itself to intellectual exposition alone; it strengthens the bond between the human being and God. He frequently shares examples from daily life that strike directly at the heart, cultivating gratitude and humility in the listener.

On one occasion, he narrated an incident from a wedding banquet he attended. Once the guests had entered, the doors were shut. After the meal ended, he noticed some children and impoverished villagers entering to consume the leftover bones and scraps of meat. He explained that these people habitually attend weddings for this very purpose. He shared this episode to remind us how rarely we pause to thank God for the regular provision of food, while there are others who subsist on leftovers.

At another time, he spoke of a patient suffering severe difficulty in breathing. He shared this to awaken in us the realization that breathing freely, without pain, is a profound blessing we seldom acknowledge. Such stories instill a renewed sense of gratitude to God.

As a Motivational Speaker

At times, Dr. Saleem's speech also carries the tenor of a motivational speaker—particularly when addressing topics such as anger management, parenting, or the principles of a successful life. His talks are not only intellectually enriching but also practically solution-oriented. His balanced style leaves listeners both enlightened and encouraged, equipped with fresh guidance for life.

It is truly a blessing of God that we live in an era graced by scholars like Dr. Shehzad Saleem, and that we have the opportunity to learn and grow under their guidance.



WISDOM IN WORDS, KINDNESS IN DEEDS: THE LEGACY OF DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Abid Mehmood Hashmi

In a world where voices rise and fade with the trends of time, some individuals stand out as enduring beacons of wisdom and compassion. One such figure is Dr. Shehzad Saleem, a distinguished Islamic scholar who has spent nearly four decades—37 years—preaching Islam with clarity, humility, and unwavering dedication. Recently, his lifelong contributions were honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning (GCIL), a recognition befitting a man whose influence has touched hearts across continents.

Scholar, Teacher, and Moral Guide

Throughout his career, Dr. Shehzad Saleem has combined scholarship with accessibility. His short, punchy moral reminders—shared through social media—have become a source of daily inspiration for thousands. Whether it is a concise reflection on patience, a pithy warning against arrogance, or a hopeful note on gratitude, his words are crafted to linger in the heart long after they are read.

Some of these reflections later found permanence in his published works. Essays such as “Going the Extra Mile” and “Making Friends with Problems” capture his ability to translate faith into practical guidance for everyday life. In “Overcoming Despair and Dejection,” he reminds readers never to lose faith in God’s mercy, while “Saving for Charity” reflects his deep conviction that financial blessings find their true purpose in serving others.

Equally impactful are his poetic contributions. His verses often celebrate the importance of good deeds, the fleeting nature of life, and the beauty of sincerity. Poems like “Small Acts of Kindness” and “Never Lose Hope” have resonated strongly with audiences, while “Let us then Live for Others!” stands as a heartfelt manifesto of his lifelong philosophy.

A Philanthropist at Heart

Beyond his words, Dr. Shehzad Saleem has built a legacy of action. He has always believed that education is the key to empowerment, and he has consistently stepped forward to support those unable to pursue it due to financial hardship. Over the years, countless students have found in him not just a mentor but also a benefactor who proactively ensures that no dream is left unrealized because of poverty.

His responsiveness is legendary. People testify that a single SMS is enough—within no time, he is ready to extend help, guidance, or resources. Whether it is arranging scholarships, offering personal advice, or simply lending a listening ear, his generosity flows with remarkable speed and sincerity.

A Legacy for Generations

The Lifetime Achievement Award from Al-Mawrid US is not just a personal milestone for Dr. Shehzad Saleem; it is a testament to the power of living one’s life in service of both God and humanity. For 37 years, he has combined scholarship with compassion, teaching with poetry, and faith with philanthropy.

As his journey continues, Dr. Shehzad Saleem stands as a reminder that greatness lies not in titles or accolades but in consistent, quiet acts of kindness, the ability to touch lives with a few wise words, and the readiness to lift others when they stumble. His words “Never Lose Hope,” “Going the Extra Mile,” and “Small Acts of Kindness”—are not just titles of his works, but guiding principles of his life.



NEWSLETTER - AL-MAWRID US

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Last month, a ceremony was held at the Ghamidi Center in honor of Dr. Shehzad Saleem. This event was organized in recognition of the 37 years of scholarly and dawah services of Dr. Shehzad Saleem, a renowned scholar of Al-Mawrid America, during which he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Muhammad Hassan Ilyas, Director of Research and Communication at the Ghamidi Center, performed the duties of host at the event. On this occasion, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, other scholars of Al-Mawrid America, as well as the relatives and friends of Dr. Shehzad Saleem, participated both online and in person and expressed their reflections on his scholarly, intellectual, and personal qualities. The recording of this event is available on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

IJTIHADI APPLICATIONS

Within the ongoing video series addressing 23 objections under the auspices of the Ghamidi Center, a new subject has been initiated under the title “Ijtihadi Applications.” In these sessions, the ijtihadi applications made by Javed Ahmed Ghamidi to date and the criticisms directed at them by scholars are brought into discussion. In the sessions held in August 2025, the focus was upon the ijtihadi applications of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi in the matters of zakat and divorce. These sessions may be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

DOCUMENTARY ON MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD

In August 2025, a comprehensive documentary was produced highlighting all the significant aspects of the life of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The script and research for this one-hour-and-thirty-five-minute-long documentary were undertaken by Mr. Naeem Ahmad Baloch, a scholar of the Ghamidi Center. He not only provided a detailed examination of the struggle in Maulana’s life but also offered a thorough portrayal of the political, social, and religious conditions of that era. Produced under the supervision of Muhammad Hassan Ilyas, the documentary was presented at the highest level through graphics and visuals by the relevant team of the Ghamidi Center. The narration was rendered by Mr. Khalid Syed. This documentary, under the title “Maulana Abu al-Kalam Azad: A Lost Treasure,” is available on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

HUJJATULLAH AL-BALIGHAH

The Ghamidi Center has launched a new scholarly series titled “Hujjatullah al-Balighah.” In this series, Mr. Hassan Ilyas presents his questions and critiques concerning the important discourses in the celebrated work Hujjatullah al-Balighah of Shah Wali Allah al-Muhaddith al-Dihlawi before Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, who then provides his views and commentary upon them. This series is being broadcast sequentially on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center. Students and seekers of knowledge have deemed it very beneficial from an academic perspective.

PHILOSOPHY SERIES

Some time ago, the Ghamidi Center recorded an academic series under the title “Philosophy.” This series contains reasoned discussions on the fundamental concepts of philosophy, its practical dimensions, a comparative analysis of Western and Eastern philosophy, and its role in religious and scientific contexts. This series is not only a valuable addition for scholars and researchers but also offers students and general readers a rare opportunity to understand the otherwise complex subject of philosophy in a comprehensible manner. It has been produced in audio format. Mr. Hassan Ilyas hosted the series, while Javed Ahmed Ghamidi participated as the guest discussant.

This “Philosophy Series” is now being released sequentially for viewers on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

THE LIFE STORY OF DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

In August 2025, Mr. Hassan Ilyas conducted a detailed interview with Dr. Shehzad Saleem, a renowned scholar of the Ghamidi Center. In this conversation, Dr. Shehzad Saleem shed light on his scholarly and intellectual journey, the circumstances of his first meeting with Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, his family background, and various aspects of his personal life. Additionally, he also discussed the difficulties and challenges encountered in the course of his academic journey. The recording of this interview may be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

THE INNOVATION OF DECLARING THE LAWFUL AS UNLAWFUL

In his article, Syed Manzoor ul Hassan has clarified that declaring the lawful as unlawful or the unlawful as lawful is tantamount to fabricating lies against God, which the Quran sternly prohibits. Issuing self-fashioned verdicts in religious matters is not only an innovation but also an audacious act of legislating in religion, which is manifest misguidance. In the light of the Quran and Sunnah, such conduct has been identified as the cause of deviation among previous communities, and Muslims have been strongly warned to avoid it. This article is available in the August 2025 issue of Ishraq America.

VOICE OF RESEARCH

In the ongoing online seminars organized under the title “Voice of Research” by the Ghamidi Center, two subjects were discussed last month: “Is the Quran a Book of Science?” and “Gaza: A Trial for the Muslim Ummah.” On the former, Mr. Salman Ahmad Sheikh, while addressing the subject, spoke on key points such as: “Human Intelligence versus Artificial Intelligence,” “Does the Quran mention computing?” “Is artificial intelligence a satanic enterprise?” and “Can computer intelligence surpass that of human beings?”

On the latter subject, Dr. Ghitreef Shehbaz Nadwi, while speaking on the current situation in Gaza, elaborated on the following major points: “The silence of the Muslim world is a sign of moral bankruptcy,” “The real issue is not the lack of resources but the lack of leadership and political will,” and “What is required now is strategy and awakening.” The recordings of these seminars are available on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

ASK GHAMIDI

In the online question-and-answer sessions conducted under the title “Ask Ghamidi” by the Ghamidi Center, some of the significant questions asked last month included: “Is unconscious faith necessary for Paradise?” “Would it be correct to impose the responsibility of maintenance (nanfaqa) upon women?” “Why does the Quran only mention fair maidens (hur)?” and “Can the government demolish a mosque?” The recordings of these sessions are available on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

WEEKLY LESSONS IN QURAN AND HADITH

In August 2025, during the live lessons on the Quran and Hadith by Mr. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi under the auspices of the Ghamidi Center, he taught verses 87–112 of Surah al-Anbiya and verses 1–20 of Surah al-Hajj. As for the lessons in hadith, some of the important points discussed included: “The Messenger of Allah’s declaration of dissociation from a tyrannical and hypocritical ruler,” “What is faith?” “Excess in acts of worship,” and “The sin of abandoning one’s wives.” These lessons on Quran and Hadith can be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

BOOK STALL OF THE GHAMIDI CENTER

In August 2025, the Ghamidi Center participated in the 62nd annual convention of ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) held in the United States, where it set up a bookstall displaying the works of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and other scholars. A large number of people visited the stall and purchased books.

MAULANA SYED ABU AL-ALA MAUDUDI: AN EPOCH-MAKING THINKER!

In his article, Mr. Muhammad Hassan Ilyas highlighted various scholarly and intellectual aspects of the personality of Maulana Maududi, writing that he was one of the remarkable thinkers of the twentieth century who presented Islam not merely as a collection of rituals but as a comprehensive system of life. He imparted a new intellectual formation to Islamic terminology, initiated dialogue with the modern age in the light of ijthadi principles, and gave Islamic thought a new direction through his civilizational interpretation of religion. His writings constituted an intellectual revolution on the levels of language, method, and civilization. Maulana was not only the custodian of tradition but also its critic, reformer, and builder. This article can be read in the previous month's issue of Ishraq America.

TAFHEEM AL-ATHAR SERIES

In the ongoing "Tafheem al-Athar" series organized by the Ghamidi Center, the sessions held in August 2025 addressed important subjects such as: "The Caliphate of Sayyidna Ali – The Political Stance of Amir Muawiyah," "The Nomination of Yazid as Crown Prince – The Political Stance of Amir Muawiyah," "The Struggle of Various Clannish Solidarities among the Quraysh," "The Martyrdom of Uthman (RA) and the Beginning of the Era of Domination," and "The Movements of Revolt during the Reign of Yazid." The recordings of these sessions are available on the organization's YouTube channel.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH HASSAN ILYAS

The well-known YouTube channel "Muslim Today" continues to broadcast the program "Ask Hassan Ilyas" in which Muhammad Hassan Ilyas appears as a guest to answer scholarly, intellectual, and religious questions posed by the audience. Some of the important points discussed in August 2025 included: "Do miracles occur today?" "The devotional methodology of Ahmad Raza Khan," "Why did Sayyidna Abu Bakr burn the hadiths?" and "Issuing verdicts of blasphemy and disbelief against others." The recording of this program is available on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

THE ONLINE KHANQAH OF THE GHAMIDI CENTER

In the sessions of the ongoing online khanqah held last month under the Ghamidi Center, some of the important points discussed included: "Feeling fear when speaking with one's own," "Should one seek to please or compromise principles?" "Between truth and goodness, which should be given preference?" and "Making hasty decisions." The recordings of these sessions of the online khanqah can be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

ISLAM STUDY CIRCLE

In August 2025, Dr. Shehzad Saleem, in the program "Islam Study Circle," spoke on subjects from the Quran, hadith, and the Bible, under the titles: "Remembrance of God," "Good Morals," and "Guard Your Heart." Furthermore, at the end of the session, a discussion was held on the subject "Count Your Blessings," and questions related to the topics discussed were answered. This session is conducted in the English language. The recording of the session can be viewed on the institution's YouTube channel.

FAITH AND BELIEFS

Under the “Meezan Lecture Series,” Dr. Shehzad Saleem continues the teaching of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s book Meezan in the English language. Last month, he recorded two lectures on the subject of “Faith and Beliefs.” The recordings of these lectures may be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH

“Ilm o Hikmat: With Ghamidi” is a well-known program of Dunya News Channel, Pakistan, which has been airing for several years. It is recorded in Dallas and broadcast weekly. The program is hosted by Mr. Hassan Ilyas, Director of Research and Communication at the Ghamidi Center. Recently, the subject “The Rise and Fall of the Muslim Ummah” was under discussion in this program. A total of twelve episodes of this series were recorded, in which significant epochs of the history of the Muslim Ummah, intellectual decline, and the collective attitudes of the Ummah were analyzed in depth. Last month, after comprehensively covering this subject, the series was brought to completion. All the recordings of this series can be viewed on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

ONLINE PRIVATE CONSULTATION SESSIONS OF DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Every month, Dr. Shehzad Saleem arranges online private consultation sessions with people. In these sessions, individuals seek his advice on various personal and familial issues. Last month, more than thirty such sessions were held. In these sessions, people consulted Dr. Shehzad Saleem regarding problems faced by parents and issues of adolescence.

ISSUANCE OF FATWAS BASED ON RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

With respect to the legal applications of the Shariah, people often contact the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning, Al-Mawrid US. They require applied opinions on matters such as marriage and divorce, inheritance, and certain other social and economic aspects. Last month, in accordance with such diverse needs, multiple fatwas were issued. These were delivered by Mr. Hassan Ilyas in the light of the thought of Mr. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi.

ASK DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Every month, Dr. Shehzad Saleem conducts a live question-and-answer session in which he responds to questions regarding various religious, ethical, and social topics arising in people’s minds. In this session, questions may be asked in both Urdu and English. The recordings of these sessions can be viewed on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

TEACHING OF “AL-BAYAN” IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Dr. Shehzad Saleem is engaged in teaching the Quranic exegesis al-Bayan by Javed Ahmed Ghamidi in the English language, so that those who know English may also benefit from it. In August 2025, he delivered lessons in English on verses 56–92 of Surah al-Anam. The recordings of these sessions are available on the YouTube channel of the Ghamidi Center.

